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HEDDA GABLER

A Drama in Four Acts

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BOSTON

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HEDDA GABLER

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

BY

HENRIK IBSEN

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY

EDMUND GOSSE

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

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EDMUND GOSSE.

London, Dec. 12, 1890.

THE PERSONS.

GEORGE TESMAN, a young man of letters
MRS. HEDDA TESMAN (born GABLER), his wife
MISS JULIANA TESMAN, his aunt
MRS. ELVSTED
JUDGE BRACK
EJLERT LÖVBORG
BERTHA, servant to the Tesmans.

The action proceeds in Tesman's villa in the western part of the city.

NOTE.

It has seemed impossible, without producing an effect hopelessly un-English, to preserve in translation the distinction between "you" (*de*) and "thou" (*du*). But as some shades of characterization may be lost without this, it seems well to describe the conduct of the various persons in this particular. Hedda says "thou" to no one except to Tesman and to Mrs. Elvsted, but always to them. Tesman says "thou" to Hedda, to his aunt, Juliana, and to Lövborg. Lövborg says "thou" to Hedda when no one else is listening, but "you" on other occasions. Mrs. Elvsted tries to say "thou" to Hedda, and after a little difficulty succeeds. Brack never uses "thou," even in his most confidential moments with Hedda.

E. G.

HEDDA GABLER.

ACT I.

A spacious, pretty, and tastefully furnished sitting-room, decorated in dark colors. In the wall at the back is a broad door-way, with curtains drawn aside. This door-way leads into a smaller room, which is furnished in the same style as the sitting-room. On the wall to the right in this latter there is a folding-door, which leads out to the hall. On the opposite wall, to the left, there is a glass door; also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes of glass are seen part of a verandah, which projects outside, and trees covered with autumn foliage. On the floor in front stands an oval table with a cover on it and chairs around. In front of the wall on the right a broad, dark, porcelain stove, a high-backed arm-chair, a foot-stool, with cushions and two ottomans. Up in the right-hand corner a settee and a small round table. In front, to left, a little away from the wall, a sofa.

Opposite the glass door a pianoforte. On both sides of the doorway in the back stand étagères with pieces of terra cotta and majolica. Close to the back wall of the inner room is seen a sofa, a table, and some chairs. Above this sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome elderly man in a general's uniform. Over the table a chandelier with dim, milk-colored shade. A great many bouquets of flowers, in vases and glasses, are arranged about the sitting-room. Others lie on the table. Thick carpets are spread on the floors of both rooms. It is morning, and the sun shines in through the glass door.

Miss Juliana Tesman, *with hat and parasol, comes in from the hall, followed by* Bertha, *who carries a bouquet with paper wrapped around it.* Miss Tesman *is a good-natured-looking lady of about sixty-five, neatly, but simply dressed in a gray walking costume.* Bertha *is a somewhat elderly servant-maid, with a plain and rather countrified appearance.*

Miss Tesman.

[*Stands inside the door, listens, and says under her breath.*] Well! I declare if I believe that they are up yet!

BERTHA.

[*In the same tone.*] That's just what I said, Miss Juliana. Just think how late the steamer came in last night. And what they were doing after that! Gracious, the amount of things the young mistress would unpack before she would consent to go to bed!

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, yes! Let them have their sleep out. But, at all events, they shall have fresh morning air when they come.

[*She goes to the glass door, and throws it wide open.*]

BERTHA.

[*At the table, standing irresolute, with the bouquet in her hand.*] There isn't an atom of room left anywhere. I think I shall put it down here, miss.

[*Lays down the bouquet in front of the pianoforte.*]

MISS TESMAN.

Well, you've got a new master and mistress at last, my dear Bertha. God knows how hard it is for me to part with you.

BERTHA.

[*Tearfully.*] And—for me—too! What am I to say? I, who have been in your service for all these years and years, Miss Juliana.

MISS TESMAN.

We must take it quietly, Bertha. The truth is, there's nothing else to be done. George *must* have you with him in the house, you see. He *must*. You have been used to look after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTHA.

Yes, miss, but I can't help thinking so much about her who lies at home. Poor thing, so utterly helpless! And then with a new servant-maid there. *She'll* never, never learn to wait on the invalid properly.

MISS TESMAN.

Oh! I shall get her into proper training for it. And I shall do most of it myself, you may be sure. You need not be so anxious about my poor sister, dear Bertha.

BERTHA.

Yes, but you know there are other things besides, Miss Juliana. I am so dreadfully afraid that I shall not be able to suit the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN.

Now, dear me, just at first there may possibly be one thing or another——

BERTHA.

For there's no doubt that she's tremendously particular.

MISS TESMAN.

Well, you can understand that. General Gabler's daughter. What she was used to as long as the General lived! Can you remember when she rode over with her father? In the long, black riding-habit? And with feathers in her hat?

BERTHA.

Yes, I should think I did. Well! if ever I thought in those days that she and Master George would make a match of it.

MISS TESMAN.

Nor I either. But by the way, Bertha, while I remember it, you must not say Master George in future; you must say the Doctor.

BERTHA.

Oh, yes, the young mistress said something about that last night—the very moment she came in at the door. Is that so, Miss Juliana?

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, of course it is. Recollect, Bertha, they made him a doctor while he was abroad. While he was travelling, you understand. I did not know a word about it until he told me down there on the quay.

BERTHA.

Well, he can be made whatever he likes, he can. He is so clever. But I should never have believed that he would have taken to curing people.

MISS TESMAN.

No, he is not that sort of doctor. [*Nods significantly.*] Besides, who knows but what you may soon have to call him something grander still.

BERTHA.

Not really! What may that be, Miss Juliana?

MISS TESMAN.

[*Smiles.*] H'm!—I am not sure that you ought to know about it. [*Agitated.*] Oh, dear, Oh, dear! if only my poor Jochum could rise from his grave and see what his little boy has grown into! [*Glances around.*] Taken the covers off all the furniture?

BERTHA.

Mrs. George said I was to do so. She can't bear covers on the chairs she says.

MISS TESMAN.

But—are they to be like this every day?

BERTHA.

Yes, I believe so. Mrs. George said so. As to the doctor, he didn't say anything.

GEORGE TESMAN *enters, humming, from the right side into the back room, carrying an empty open hand-bag. He is of middle height, a young-look-*

ing man of thirty-three, rather stout, with an open, round, jolly countenance, blond hair and beard. He wears spectacles and is dressed in a comfortable, rather careless indoor suit.

MISS TESMAN.

Good-morning, good-morning, George.

TESMAN.

Aunt Julie! Dear Aunt Julie! [*Walks up to her and shakes her hand.*] Right out here so early! Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Well, you can fancy I wanted to look after you a little.

TESMAN.

And that although you have not had your usual night's rest!

MISS TESMAN.

Oh, that doesn't matter the least in the world.

TESMAN.

Well, did you get safe home from the quay? Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Oh, dear me, yes, thank God! The Judge was so kind as to see me home right to my door.

TESMAN.

We were so sorry we could not take you up in the carriage. But you saw yourself—Hedda had so many boxes that she was obliged to take with her.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, it was quite dreadful what a quantity of boxes she had.

BERTHA.

[*To* TESMAN.] Shall I go up and ask the mistress whether I can help her?

TESMAN.

No, thank you, Bertha—it is not worth while for you to do that. If she wanted anything she would ring, she said.

BERTHA.

[*To the right.*] Yes, yes, all right.

TESMAN.

But look here—take this bag away with you.

BERTHA.

[*Takes it.*] I will put it up in the garret.
[*She goes out through the hall door.*]

TESMAN.

Just fancy, Aunt, that whole bag was stuffed full of nothing but transcripts. It is perfectly incredible what I have collected in the various archives. Wonderful old things, which nobody had any idea of the existence of.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, indeed, you have not wasted your time on your wedding-journey, George.

TESMAN.

No, I may say I have not. But do take off your hat, Aunt. Look here. Let me untie the bow. Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

[*While he does it.*] Oh, dear me! it seems exactly as if you were still at home with us.

TESMAN.

[*Turns and swings the hat in his hand.*] Well, what a smart, showy hat you have got for yourself, to be sure.

MISS TESMAN.

I bought it for Hedda's sake.

TESMAN.

For Hedda's sake, eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, in order that Hedda may not be ashamed of me when we are walking in the street together.

TESMAN.

[*Patting her under the chin.*] You positively think of everything, Aunt Julie! [*Puts the hat on a chair close to the table.*] Now, look here, let us sit down here on this sofa and chat a little until Hedda comes.

[*They sit down. She places her parasol on the settee.*]

MISS TESMAN.

[*Takes both his hands in hers and looks at him.*] How nice it is to have you, George, as large as life, before one's very eyes again. Oh, my dear, you are poor Jochum's own boy.

TESMAN.

And for me, too! To see you again, Aunt Julie! You who have been both father and mother to me.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, I know very well that you are still fond of your old aunts.

TESMAN.

And so there's no improvement in Aunt Rina. Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Ah, no, there is no improvement for her to be hoped for, poor thing. She lies there just as she has lain all these years. But I pray the Lord to let me keep her a while yet. For I don't know how I could live without her, George. Most of all now, you see, when I have not you to look after any longer.

TESMAN.

[*Pats her on the back.*] Come, come!

MISS TESMAN.

Well, but remember that you are a married man now, George. Fancy its being *you* who carried off Hedda Gabler! The lovely Hedda Gabler. Think of it! She who had such a crowd of suitors around her!

TESMAN.

[*Hums a little and smiles contentedly.*] Yes, I expect I have plenty of good friends here in town that envy me. Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

And what a long wedding-journey you made, to be sure! More than five—nearly six months.

TESMAN.

Well, it has been a sort of travelling scholarship for me as well. All the archives I had to examine! And the mass of books I had to read through!

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, indeed, I expect so. [*More quietly and in a lower voice.*] But now listen, George—haven't you anything—anything particular to tell me?

TESMAN.

About the journey?

MISS TESMAN.

Yes.

TESMAN.

No, I don't think of anything more than I have mentioned in my letters. I told you yesterday about my taking my doctor's degree while we were abroad.

MISS TESMAN.

Oh, yes, yes, you told me that. But I mean—haven't you any—any particular—prospects——?

TESMAN.

Prospects?

MISS TESMAN.

Good God, George—I'm your old aunt!

TESMAN.

Oh, yes, I have prospects.

MISS TESMAN.

Well!

TESMAN.

I have an excellent chance of becoming a professor one of these days.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, a professor——!

TESMAN.

Or—I might even say, I am certain of becoming one. But, dear Aunt Julie, you know that just as well as I do!

MISS TESMAN.

[*Giggling.*] Yes, of course I do. You are quite right about that. [*Crosses over.*] But we were talking about your journey. It must have cost a lot of money, George?

TESMAN.

No, indeed. That large stipend went a long way toward paying our expenses.

MISS TESMAN.

But I can scarcely understand how you can have made it sufficient for two of you.

TESMAN.

No, no, it is not easy to make that out, is it? Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

And when it is a lady that is your travelling companion. For I've heard that that makes everything frightfully more expensive.

TESMAN.

Yes, of course—rather more expensive it certainly is. But Hedda was *bound* to have that journey, Aunt! She was really *bound* to have it. We could not have done anything else.

MISS TESMAN.

No, no, you could not. A wedding-trip is quite the proper thing nowadays. But tell me—have you made yourself quite comfortable here in these rooms?

TESMAN.

Oh, yes, indeed. I have been busy ever since it was light.

MISS TESMAN.

And what do you think of it all?

TESMAN.

Splendid. Perfectly splendid! The only thing I don't know is what we shall do with the two empty rooms between the back-room there and Hedda's bedroom.

MISS TESMAN.

[*Smiling.*] Oh, my dear George, you may find a use for them in the—course of time.

TESMAN.

Yes, you are quite right about that, Aunt Julie. For, as I add to my collection of books, I shall—eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Just so, my dear boy. It was your collection of books I was thinking about.

TESMAN.

I am most pleased for Hedda's sake. Before we were engaged she said that she never wanted to live anywhere else than in Mrs. Falk's villa.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, fancy!—and that it should happen to be for sale just when you had started on your journey.

TESMAN.

Yes, Aunt Julie, there is no doubt we were in luck's way. Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

But expensive, my dear George! It will be expensive for you—all this place.

TESMAN.

[*Looks rather dispiritedly at her.*] Yes, I daresay it will be, Aunt.

MISS TESMAN.

Oh, my goodness!

TESMAN.

How much do you think? Give a guess. Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

No, I can't possibly tell till all the bills come in.

TESMAN.

Well, fortunately Judge Brack has bargained for lenient terms for me. He wrote so himself to Hedda.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, do not bother about that, my boy. Besides I have given security for the furniture and all the carpets.

TESMAN.

Security? You? Dear Aunt Julie, what sort of security could you give?

MISS TESMAN.

I have given a mortgage on our income.

TESMAN.

[*Jumps up.*] What! On your—and Aunt Rina's income!

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, you know, I did not see any other way out of it.

TESMAN.

[*Stands in front of her.*] But you must be mad, Aunt! The income—that is the only thing which you and Aunt Rina have to live upon.

MISS TESMAN.

Well, well, don't be so excited about it. It is all a matter of form, you know. Judge Brack said so too. For it was he who was so kind as to arrange the whole thing for me. Merely a matter of form, he said.

TESMAN.

Yes, that may well be. But at the same time——

MISS TESMAN.

And now you will have your own salary to draw from. And, dear me, supposing we have to fork out a little? Pinch a little at first? It will merely be like a pleasure for us, that will.

TESMAN.

Oh, Aunt, you will never be tired of sacrificing yourself for me!

MISS TESMAN.

[*Stands up and places her hands on his shoulders.*] Do you think I have any other joy in this world than to smoothe the way for you, my dear boy? You, who have never had a father or a mother to look after you. And now we stand close to the goal. The prospect may have seemed a little black from time to time. But, thank God, it's all over now, George!

TESMAN.

Yes, it really is marvellous how everything has adapted itself.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, and those who opposed you—and tried to bar your way—they have all had to submit. They are fallen, George! He who was the most dangerous of all—he is just the one who has fallen worst. And now he lies in the pit he digged for himself—poor misguided man!

TESMAN.

Have you heard anything about Ejlert? Since I went away, I mean.

MISS TESMAN.

Nothing, except that he has been publishing a new book.

TESMAN.

Not really? Ejlert Lovborg? Quite lately? Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, they say so. Heaven knows if there can be much good in it. No, when *your* new book comes out—that will be something different, that will, George! What is the subject to be?

TESMAN.

It will treat of the domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN.

Fancy your being able to write about that as well!

TESMAN.

At the same time, it may be a long while before the book is ready. I have these extensive collections, which must be arranged first of all, you see.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, arrange and collect—you are good at that. You are not poor Jochum's son for nothing.

TESMAN.

I am so awfully glad to be going on with it. Especially now that I have a comfortable house and home to work in.

MISS TESMAN.

And first and foremost, now you have her who was the desire of your heart, dear George.

TESMAN.

[*Embraces her.*] Oh, yes, yes, Aunt Julie. Hedda —she is the loveliest part of it all! [*Looks toward the doorway.*] I think she's coming now, eh?

[HEDDA *approaches from the left through the back room. She is a lady of twenty-nine. Face and figure dignified and distinguished. The color of the skin uniformly pallid. The eyes steel-gray, with a cold, open expression of serenity. The hair an agreeable brown, of medium tint, but not very thick. She is dressed in tasteful, somewhat loose morning costume.*]

MISS TESMAN.

Good-morning, dear Hedda! Good-morning!

HEDDA.

[*Stretching her hand to her.*] Good-morning, dear Miss Tesman! Paying a visit so early? That was friendly of you.

MISS TESMAN.

[*Seems a little embarrassed.*] Well, have you slept comfortably in your new home?

HEDDA.

Oh, yes, thanks! Tolerably.

TESMAN.

[*Laughs.*] Tolerably. Well, that is a joke, Hedda! You were sleeping like a stone, when I got up.

HEDDA.

Fortunately. We have to accustom ourselves to everything new, Miss Tesman. It comes little by little. [*Looks toward the left.*] Ugh!—the girl has

left the balcony door open. There is a perfect tide of sunshine in here.

MISS TESMAN.

[*Goes to the door.*] Well, we will shut it.

HEDDA.

No, no, don't do that! Dear Tesman, draw the curtains. That gives a softer light.

TESMAN.

[*At the door.*] All right—all right. There, Hedda—now you have both shade and fresh air.

HEDDA.

Yes, there is some need of fresh air here. All these flowers—— But, dear Miss Tesman, won't you sit down?

MISS TESMAN.

No, thank you. Now I know that all is going on well here, thank God. And I must be getting home again now. To her who lies and waits there so drearily, poor thing.

TESMAN.

Give her ever so many kind messages from me. And say that I am coming over to see her to-day, later on.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, I will. Oh! but—George. [*Fumbles in the pocket of her cloak.*] I almost forgot. I have something here for you.

TESMAN.

What is it, Aunt? Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

[*Brings up a flat package wrapped in newspaper and gives it to him.*] Look here, my dear boy.

TESMAN.

[*Opens it.*] No! you don't say so. Have you really been keeping this for me, Aunt Julie! Hedda! This is positively touching! Eh?

HEDDA.

[*By the étagères to the right.*] Yes, dear, what is it?

TESMAN.

My old morning shoes! My slippers!

HEDDA.

Ah, yes! I remember you so often spoke of them while we were travelling.

TESMAN.

Yes, I wanted them so badly. [*Goes to her.*] You shall just look at them, Hedda.

HEDDA.

[*Goes away toward the stove.*] No, thanks, I really don't care about doing that.

TESMAN.

[*Following her.*] Just think—Aunt Rina lay and embroidered them for me. So ill as she was. Oh, you can't believe how many memories are bound up in them.

HEDDA.

[*By the table.*] Not for me personally.

MISS TESMAN.

Hedda is quite right about that, George.

TESMAN.

Yes, but I thought that now, now she belongs to the family.

HEDDA.

[*Interrupting.*] We shall never be able to get on with that servant, Tesman.

MISS TESMAN.

Not get on with Bertha?

TESMAN.

What do you mean, dear? Eh?

HEDDA.

[*Points.*] Look there! She has left her old hat behind her on the chair.

TESMAN.

[*Horrified, drops the slippers on the floor.*] But Hedda—

HEDDA.

Think—if any one came in and saw a thing of that kind.

TESMAN.

But—but Hedda—it is Aunt Julie's hat!

HEDDA.

Really?

MISS TESMAN.

[*Takes the hat.*] Yes, indeed, it is mine. And it is not old at all, little Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

I really did not look carefully at it, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN.

[*Putting on the hat.*] This is positively the first time I have worn it. Yes, I assure you it is.

TESMAN.

And it is smart too! Really splendid!

MISS TESMAN.

Oh, only moderately, my dear George. [*Looks around.*] My parasol? Here it is. [*Takes it.*] For this is also mine. [*Murmurs.*] Not Bertha's.

TESMAN.

New hat and parasol! Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA.

And very nice and pretty they are.

TESMAN.

Yes, are they not? Eh? But, Aunt, look carefully at Hedda before you go. See how nice and pretty *she* is!

MISS TESMAN.

Oh, my dear, there is nothing new in that, Hedda has been lovely all her days.

[*She nods and goes to the right.*]

TESMAN.

[*Follows her.*] Yes, but have you noticed how buxom and plump she has become? How she has filled out during our trip?

HEDDA.

[*Walks across the floor.*] Oh! don't!

MISS TESMAN.

[*Stops and turns around.*] Filled out?

TESMAN.

Yes, Aunt Julie, you don't notice it so much now she has her wrapper on. But I, who have opportunity of——

HEDDA.

[*At the glass door, impatiently.*] Oh, you have no opportunity for anything!

TESMAN.

It must be the mountain air down there in the Tyrol——

HEDDA.

[*Sharply, interrupting.*] I am exactly as I was when I started.

TESMAN.

Yes, that is what you maintain. But I declare that you are not. Do not you think so, Aunt?

MISS TESMAN.

[*Folds her hands and gazes at her.*] Hedda is lovely—lovely—lovely. [*Goes to her, bends her head down with both her hands, and kisses her hair.*] God bless and preserve Hedda Tesman. For George's sake.

HEDDA.

[*Gently releases herself.*] Oh! let me go.

MISS TESMAN.

[*Quietly agitated.*] I shall come in to have a look at you every single day.

TESMAN.

Yes, do, Aunt! Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Good-by—good-by!

[*She goes out through the hall door.* TESMAN *follows her out. The door stands half open.* TESMAN *is heard to repeat his messages to Aunt Rina and thanks for the slippers. At the same time,* HEDDA *walks across the floor, lifts her arms and clenches her hands as if distracted. Draws the curtains from the glass door, remains standing there, and looks out. Shortly after,* TESMAN *comes in again and shuts the door behind him.*]

TESMAN.

[*Takes the slippers up from the floor.*] What are you standing there and looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA.

[*Once more calm and self-possessed.*] I was merely standing and looking out at the foliage. It is so yellow. And so withered.

TESMAN.

[*Picks up the slippers and lays them on the table.*] Yes, we have got into September now.

HEDDA.

[*Agitated again.*] Yes, think—we are already in —in September.

TESMAN.

Did not you think Aunt Julie was odd? Almost mysterious? Can you make out what was the matter with her? Eh?

HEDDA.

I scarcely know her. Is she accustomed to be like that?

TESMAN.

No, not as she was to-day.

HEDDA.

[*Goes away from the glass door.*] Do you think she was offended about the hat?

TESMAN.

Oh! nothing much! Perhaps just a very little for the moment——

HEDDA.

But what a way of behaving to throw one's hat away from one here in the drawing-room! One does not do that.

TESMAN.

Well, you can depend upon it, Aunt Julie is not in the habit of doing so.

HEDDA.

All the same I shall take care to make it all right again with her.

TESMAN.

Yes, dear, sweet Hedda, you will do that, won't you?

HEDDA.

When you go to see them later on to-day, you can ask her to come here this evening.

TESMAN.

Yes, that I certainly will. And then there is one thing you could do which would please her immensely.

HEDDA.

What?

TESMAN.

If you could only persuade yourself to say "Thou" to her. For my sake, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA.

No, no, Tesman—that you really must not ask me to do. I have told you so once before. I shall try to call her Aunt. And that must be enough.

TESMAN.

Very well, very well. But I merely thought, that now you belong to the family——

HEDDA.

H'm—I am not perfectly sure.

[*Goes across the floor toward the doorway.*]

TESMAN.

[*After a pause.*] Is anything the matter with you, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA.

I was merely looking at my old piano. It does not seem to match very well with all the rest.

TESMAN.

The first time I am paid we will see about getting it changed.

HEDDA.

No, no—not changed. I will not have it taken away. We can put it into the back room. And we can have another here in its place. When there's an occasion, I mean.

TESMAN.

[*Slightly embarrassed.*] Yes, we can do that.

HEDDA.

[*Takes up the bouquet on the piano.*] These flowers were not here when we came last night.

TESMAN.

Aunt Julie must have brought them for you.

HEDDA.

[*Looks into the bouquet.*] A visiting card. [*Takes it out and reads.*] "Am coming again later in the day." Can you guess whom it is from?

TESMAN.

No. From whom, then? Eh?

HEDDA.

The name is "Mrs. Elvsted."

TESMAN.

Not really? Mrs. Elvsted! Miss Rysing, her name used to be.

HEDDA.

Just so. She with the irritating hair which she went around and made a sensation with. Your old flame, I've heard.

TESMAN.

[*Laughing.*] Well, it did not last long. And that was before I knew you, Hedda, that was. But fancy her being in town!

HEDDA.

Extraordinary that she should call upon us. I have scarcely known her since our being at school together.

TESMAN.

Yes, and I have not seen her for—goodness knows how long. How she can endure living up there in that poky hole. Eh?

HEDDA.

[*Considers, and suddenly says.*] Listen, Tesman —is it not up there that there is a place which he haunts—he—Ejlert Lövborg?

TESMAN.

Yes, it is somewhere up there in that neighborhood.

BERTHA *appears in the hall door.*

BERTHA.

She has come again, ma'am—that lady who was here just now and left the flowers. [*Points.*] Those you are holding, ma'am.

HEDDA.

Ah! is she? Then will you show her in?

BERTHA *opens the door for* MRS. ELVSTED, *and goes out herself.* MRS. ELVSTED *is a slender figure, with a pretty, gentle face. The eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat prominent, with a frightened, questioning expression. Her hair is singularly bright, almost white-gold, and unusually copious and wavy. She is a year or two younger than* HEDDA. *Her costume is a dark visiting-dress, which is in good taste, but not in the latest fashion.*

HEDDA.

[*Comes pleasantly to meet her.*] Good-day, dear Mrs. Elvsted. It is awfully nice to see you again.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Nervously trying to get self-command.*] Yes, it is very long since we met.

TESMAN.

[*Holding out his hand to her.*] And we two, also. Eh?

HEDDA.

Thanks, for your lovely flowers——

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, please—I wanted to have come here at once, yesterday afternoon. But when I heard that you were travelling——

TESMAN.

Are you just come to town? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED.

I arrived at noon yesterday. Oh, I was so perfectly in despair, when I heard you were not at home.

HEDDA.

In despair! Why?

TESMAN.

But, my dear Mrs. Rysing — Mrs. Elvsted, I mean——

HEDDA.

I hope there is nothing wrong.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, there is. And I don't know any other living creature whom I could appeal to.

HEDDA.

[*Puts the bouquet on the table.*] Come—let us sit here on the sofa.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, I have not a moment's quiet to sit down.

HEDDA.

Oh, yes, I am sure you have. Come here.

[*She drags* MRS. ELVSTED *down on the sofa, and sits at her side.*]

TESMAN.

Well? And so, Mrs.——

HEDDA.

Has anything particular happened up at your place?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes—it both has and has not happened. Oh—I should be so extremely sorry if you misunderstood me——

HEDDA.

But the best thing you can do is to tell us the whole story, Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN.

You have come here on purpose to do that. Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, yes—that is so. And so I must tell you—if you don't know it already—that Ejlert Lövborg also is in town.

HEDDA.

Is Lövborg——

TESMAN.

No, you don't say that Ejlert Lövborg is come back again! Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA.

Good gracious, I hear it!

MRS. ELVSTED.

He has now been here a week. Just think of that — a whole week! In this dangerous town. Alone! With all the bad company that is to be found here.

HEDDA.

But, dear Mrs. Elvsted—how does *he* really concern you?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Looks terrified around and says rapidly.*] He was the tutor for the children.

HEDDA.

For your children?

MRS. ELVSTED.

For my husband's. I have none.

HEDDA.

For your step-children, then.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes.

TESMAN.

[*Somewhat hesitatingly.*] Was he so far—I don't quite know how to express myself—so far—regular in his mode of life that he could be set to that kind of employment? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Of late years there has been nothing to bring forward against him.

TESMAN.

Has there not, really? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA.

I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Not the smallest thing, I assure you! Not in any respect whatever. But at the same time—now, when I knew that he was here—in town—and a great deal of money passing through his hands! Now I am so mortally frightened for him.

TESMAN.

But why did he not stay up there, where he was? With you and your husband? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED.

When the book was published, he could not settle down up there with us any longer.

TESMAN.

Ah! that is true—Aunt Julie said he had brought out a new book.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, a large new book, all about the progress of civilization. It was a fortnight ago. And now it is being bought and read so much—and has made such a great sensation——

TESMAN.

Has it really? It must be something he has had lying by him from his good days.

MRS. ELVSTED.

You mean, from before——?

TESMAN.

Yes, of course.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, he has written it all since he has been up with us. Now—within the last year.

TESMAN.

That is good news, Hedda! Fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, yes, if only it might keep like that!

HEDDA.

Have you met him here?

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, not yet. I have had the greatest difficulty in finding out his address. But I am really to see him to-morrow.

HEDDA.

[*Gives her a searching look.*] All things considered, I think it seems a little strange of your husband—h'm——

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Nervously.*] Of my husband! What?

HEDDA.

To send *you* to town on such an errand. Not to come in himself and look after his friend.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, no, no—my husband has no time for that. And there were—some purchases I had to make.

HEDDA.

[*Slightly smiling.*] Ah, that is a different matter.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Rising quickly and uneasily.*] And now I do beg you, Mr. Tesman, receive Ejlert Lövborg kindly, if he comes to you! And that he is sure to do! Good gracious, you used to be such great friends once. And you both go in for the same studies. The same class of knowledge—so far as I can judge.

TESMAN.

Well, we used to, at all events.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, and therefore I do beg you so earnestly that you will—you too—that you will keep an eye upon

him. Oh! you will, won't you, Mr. Tesman—you promise me you will?

TESMAN.

Yes, I shall be very glad indeed, Mrs. Rysing——

HEDDA.

Elvsted.

TESMAN.

I shall do for Ejlert all that it is in my power to do. You can depend upon that.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, how perfectly lovely that is of you! [*Presses his hands.*] Thanks, thanks, thanks! [*With a frightened expression.*] Yes, for my husband is so very fond of him.

HEDDA.

[*Rising.*] You ought to write to him, Tesman. For perhaps he might not quite like to come to you of himself.

TESMAN.

Yes, that would be best, wouldn't it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA.

And do not put it off. Now, immediately, it seems to me.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Supplicating.*] Oh, yes, if you would!

TESMAN.

I'll write this very moment. Have you his address, Mrs.—Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes. [*Takes a little slip of paper out of her pocket and gives it to him.*] Here it is.

TESMAN.

Good, good. Then I will go in. [*Looks around him.*] That is true—the slippers? Now then.

[*Takes the package and is going.*]

HEDDA.

Be sure you write in a very cordial and friendly way to him. And write a pretty long letter, too.

TESMAN.

Yes, I will.

MRS. ELVSTED.

But not a word to hint that I have been begging for him.

TESMAN.

No, of course, not a word. Eh?

[*He goes through the back room to the left.*]

HEDDA.

[*Walks up to* MRS. ELVSTED, *smiles, and says in a low voice.*] Well! Now we have killed two birds with one stone.

MRS. ELVSTED.

What *do* you mean?

HEDDA.

Do you not understand that I wanted to get rid of him?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, that he might write the letter——

HEDDA.

And also to have a chat alone with you.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Confused.*] About the same subject?

HEDDA.

Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Distressed.*] But there is no more, Mrs. Tesman! Really no more!

HEDDA.

Oh, yes, indeed there is. There is a great deal more. I understand as much as that. Come here —let us sit down and be perfectly frank with one another.

[*She presses* MRS. ELVSTED *down into the arm-chair—by the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools.*]

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Anxiously, looks at her watch.*] But dear Mrs.——, I really intended to be going now.

HEDDA.

Oh! there cannot be any reason for hurrying—is there? Tell me a little how you are getting on at home.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, that is the very last thing I should wish to discuss.

HEDDA.

But to me, dear——? Goodness, we went to the same school together.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, but you were in the class above me! Oh! how fearfully afraid of you I was then!

HEDDA.

Were you afraid of me?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, fearfully afraid. Because, when we met on the stairs, you always used to pull my hair.

HEDDA.

No, did I really?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, and once you said you would scorch it off my head.

HEDDA.

Oh, that was only nonsense, you know.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, but I was so stupid in those days. And then besides, after—we were separated so far—far from one another. Our circles were so entirely different.

HEDDA.

Well, now we will try to come closer to each other again. Now listen! At school we said "thou" to one another. And we called one another by our Christian names——

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, you are certainly quite mistaken about that.

HEDDA.

No, I am sure I am not, no! I recollect it perfectly. And we will be frank with one another, just

as we were in those old days. [*Draws footstool nearer.*] There! [*Kisses her cheek.*] Now say "thou" to me, and call me Hedda.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Presses and pats her hands.*] Oh, such goodness and friendliness! It is something that I am not at all accustomed to.

HEDDA.

There, there, there! And I shall say "thou" to you, just as I used to do, and call you my dear Thora.

MRS. ELVSTED.

My name is Thea.

HEDDA.

So it is. Of course. I meant Thea. [*Looks significantly at her.*] So you are but little accustomed to goodness and friendliness, Thea? In your own home?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, if I had a home! But I have not one. Have never had one.

HEDDA.

[*Looking slightly at her.*] I had a suspicion of something of the sort.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Staring helplessly in front of her.*] Yes, yes, yes.

HEDDA.

I cannot quite remember now. But was it not first as housekeeper that you went up there to the sheriff's?

MRS. ELVSTED.

More properly as governess. But his wife—his then wife—she was an invalid, and confined to her bed most of the time. So I really had to undertake the housekeeping.

HEDDA.

But then, at last, you became the mistress of the house.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Dejected.*] Yes, I did.

HEDDA.

Let me see—about how long is it now, since then?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Since my marriage?

HEDDA.

Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED.

It is now five years.

HEDDA.

Ah, yes; it must be.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, those five years! Or, at all events, the last two or three. Oh, if you could realize——

HEDDA.

[*Slaps her hand softly.*] *You?* Fie, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, no—I must get used to it. Yes, if—you merely could just realize and understand——

[*Tries to use "thou" in the remainder of the conversation, but frequently relapses into "you."*]

HEDDA.

[*Casually.*] Ejlert Lövborg has also been up there for three years I believe.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Looking embarrassed at her.*] Ejlert Lövborg? Yes, he has.

HEDDA.

Did you know him already, from seeing him in town?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Scarcely at all. Yes, that is to say, by name of course.

HEDDA.

But up there in the country—he came to your house?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, he came over to us every day. He had to read with the children. For it became at last more than I could manage all by myself.

HEDDA.

One can well understand that. And your husband? I suppose that he is often away travelling?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes. You can imagine that as sheriff he has to travel around the district.

HEDDA.

[*Leans on the arm of the chair.*] Thea—poor, sweet Thea—now you must tell me everything just as it is.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Well, then you must ask me questions.

HEDDA.

What sort of a man is your husband really, Thea? I mean, how is he, socially. Is he good to you?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Evasively.*] He believes that he does all for the best.

HEDDA.

It seems to me that he must be too old for you. More than twenty years older at least.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Irritated.*] That too. One thing with another. Everything around him is distasteful to me! We do not possess a thought in common. Not one thing in the world, he and I.

HEDDA.

But is he fond of you, all the same? In his own way?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh! I don't know what he is. I am certainly just useful to him. And it does not cost much to keep me. I am cheap.

HEDDA.

That is stupid of you.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Shakes her head.*] Can't be otherwise. Not with him. He is not really fond of anybody but himself. And perhaps of the children a little.

HEDDA.

And of Ejlert Lövborg, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Looks at her.*] Of Ejlert Lövborg! What makes you think that?

HEDDA.

But, dear—I thought that if he sends you right in here to town after him [*Smiles almost imperceptibly.*]—And then you yourself said so to Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*With a nervous movement.*] Well! Yes, I did say so. [*Bursts out in a low voice.*] No—I may just as well say it first as last! For it is sure to come to the light in any case.

HEDDA.

But, my dear Thea——

MRS. ELVSTED.

Well, to make a clean breast of it! My husband had no idea I had left home.

HEDDA.

Really! Did not your husband know that?

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, of course not. Besides, he was not at home. He was travelling, he too. Oh, I could not bear it any longer, Hedda! Absolutely impossible! So lonely as I should be up there after this.

HEDDA.

Well? And so?

MRS. ELVSTED.

So I packed up some of my things, you see. What was most necessary. Quite quietly. And then I walked away from the house.

HEDDA.

Without doing anything else?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes. And then I took the train and came to town.

HEDDA.

But, my dear Thea—fancy your daring to do it!

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Rises and crosses the floor.*] Yes, and what else in the world should I do?

HEDDA.

But what do you think your husband will say when you go home again?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*At the table, looks at her.*] Up there to him?

HEDDA.

Yes, of course!

MRS. ELVSTED.

I shall never go up there to him any more.

HEDDA.

[*Rises and approaches her.*] Then you have—in serious earnest—gone away for good?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes. I did not think that there was anything else for me to do.

HEDDA.

And so—you went so perfectly openly.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, well! such things can't be really concealed, whatever you do.

HEDDA.

But what do you suppose that people will say about you, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED.

They may say exactly whatever they please. [*Sits down wearily and heavily on the sofa.*] For I have done nothing more than what I was *obliged* to do.

HEDDA.

[*After a short silence.*] What do you intend to do next? What will you take up?

MRS. ELVSTED.

I don't know yet. I only know that I must live here, where Ejlert Lövborg lives—if I *am* going to live.

HEDDA.

[*Moves a chair nearer, away from the table, sits down close to her, and strokes her hands.*] Thea—how did it come about—this friendship—between you and Ejlert Lövborg?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, it came about little by little. I got a sort of power over him.

HEDDA.

Ah?

MRS. ELVSTED.

He gave up his old habits. Not because I begged him to. For I never dared to do that. But he noticed that I was vexed at them. And so he left off.

HEDDA.

[*Conceals an involuntary smile.*] So you restored him—as people say—you, little Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, at least that is what he says himself. And he—on his side—he has made a kind of real person

out of me. Taught me to think—and to understand certain things.

HEDDA.

Did he perhaps read with you as well?

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, not exactly read. But he talked to me. Talked about such an endless quantity of things. And then came the lovely happy time when I was able to take part in his work! was allowed to help him!

HEDDA.

So you did that?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes! When he wrote anything, he always wanted me to be with him.

HEDDA.

Like two good comrades, I suppose.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Comrades! Yes, think, Hedda—that was the very word he used. Oh! I ought to feel so thor-

oughly happy. But I cannot any longer. For I don't know whether it is going to last.

HEDDA.

Are you no surer of him than that?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Gloomily.*] A woman's shadow stands between Ejlert Lövborg and me.

HEDDA.

[*Looks keenly at her.*] Who can *that* be?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Don't know. Somebody or other from—from his former life. Someone whom he certainly has never really forgotten.

HEDDA.

What has he said—about her?

MRS. ELVSTED.

He merely once—in a casual way referred to it.

HEDDA.

Well! And what did he say?

MRS. ELVSTED.

He said that when they parted she wanted to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA.

[*Coldly, with self-command.*] Oh, dear me! Nobody does that sort of thing here.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No. And therefore I think it must be that red-haired opera-singer, whom he once——

HEDDA.

Yes, I should think it might be.

MRS. ELVSTED.

For I recollect hearing it said that she went about with loaded firearms.

HEDDA.

Well—then of course it is she.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Wrings her hands.*] Yes, but just think, Hedda —I have been hearing that that singer—she is in town again. Oh!—I am perfectly in despair.

HEDDA.

[*Glances toward the back room.*] Hush! There is Tesman coming. [*Rises and whispers.*] Thea—all this must be between you and me.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Starting up.*] Oh, yes! yes! for God's sake!

GEORGE TESMAN, *with a letter in his hand, comes from the left through the back room.*

TESMAN.

There—the letter is finished.

HEDDA.

That is all right. But Mrs. Elvsted wants to be going, I think. Wait a moment. I will walk to the garden-gate with you.

TESMAN.

Hedda—can't Bertha attend to this?

HEDDA.

[*Takes the letter.*] I will tell her to.

BERTHA *comes from the hall.*

BERTHA.

Judge Brack is here and says he should so much like to see you and master.

HEDDA.

Yes, ask the Judge to be so kind as to come in And, Bertha, listen—just post this letter.

BERTHA.

[*Takes the letter.*] Yes, ma'am.

She opens the door for JUDGE BRACK *and goes out herself. The* JUDGE *is a gentleman of forty-five. Short and well built, and elastic in his movements. Face round, with distinguished profile. Hair cut short, still almost black and carefully brushed.*

Eyes bright and sparkling; eyebrows thick; mustache the same, with waxed ends. He is dressed in an elegant walking suit, a little too juvenile for his age. Uses an eyeglass, which now and then he lets drop.

JUDGE BRACK.

[*Bows, with his hat in his hand.*] May I venture to call so early in the day?

HEDDA.

Yes, indeed.

TESMAN.

[*Presses his hand.*] You are always welcome. [*Presenting him.*] Judge Brack—Miss Rysing——

HEDDA.

H'm!

BRACK.

[*Bowing.*] Ah—it is a great pleasure——

HEDDA.

[*Looks at him and laughs.*] It seems awfully funny to look at you by daylight, Judge!

BRACK.

Altered perhaps you find?

HEDDA.

Yes, a little younger, I think.

BRACK.

Sincerest thanks!

TESMAN.

But what do you think of Hedda? Eh? Does not she look well? She positively——

HEDDA.

Oh! do leave off discussing me. Rather thank the Judge for all the trouble he has had——

BRACK.

Oh, dear me—it was a positive pleasure——

HEDDA.

Yes, you are a loyal soul! But my friend here is standing, and all impatience to be off. *Au*

revoir, Judge. I shall be back here again in a moment.

[*Greetings pass.* MRS. ELVSTED *and* HEDDA *go out through the hall door.*]

BRACK.

Well—is your wife pleased on the whole?

TESMAN.

Yes, thank you so very much. That is to say—a little shifting here and there will be necessary, I understand. And there are a few things wanting. We shall be obliged to order in some little matters.

BRACK.

Indeed! Really?

TESMAN.

But you must not take any trouble about that. Hedda said that she would attend herself to anything that is wanted. Shall we sit down? Eh?

BRACK.

Thanks, just a moment. [*Sits close to the table.*] There is something I wanted to speak to you about, my dear Tesman.

TESMAN.

Indeed? Ah, of course. [*Sits down.*] It is no doubt time to think about the serious part of the feast. Eh?

BRACK.

Oh, there is no such great hurry about settling the money affairs. At the same time I can't help wishing that we had made our arrangements a little more economically.

TESMAN.

But that would never have done. Think of Hedda! You, who know her so well—I could not possibly have settled her in mean surroundings.

BRACK.

No, no. That, of course, was just the difficulty.

TESMAN.

And so, fortunately, it cannot be long before I am appointed.

BRACK.

Oh, you see, these things often drag on for a long time.

TESMAN.

Do you happen to have heard anything more precise? Eh?

BRACK.

Not anything absolutely definite. [*Breaking off.*] But it is true—I have one piece of news to give you.

TESMAN.

Ah?

BRACK.

Your old friend, Ejlert Lövborg, has come back to town.

TESMAN.

I know that already.

BRACK.

Indeed? How did you find it out?

TESMAN.

She told me—that lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK.

Ah, indeed! What was her name? I did not quite catch——

TESMAN.

Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK.

Aha!—then she's the sheriff's wife. Yes, it is up there with them that he has been staying.

TESMAN.

And fancy—I hear, to my great joy, that he is a perfectly respectable member of society again.

BRACK.

Yes, they maintain that that is so.

TESMAN.

And so he has published a new book. Eh?

BRACK.

Bless me, yes!

TESMAN.

And it has made a sensation.

BRACK.

The sensation it has made is quite extraordinary.

TESMAN.

Fancy—is not that good news to hear? He, with his marvellous gifts. I was so painfully certain that he had gone right down for good.

BRACK.

And that was the general opinion about him.

TESMAN.

But I can scarcely conceive what he will take to now! How in the world will he be able to make a living? Eh?

HEDDA, *during these last words, has entered through the hall door.*

HEDDA.

[*To* BRACK, *laughs somewhat scornfully.*] Tesman is always going about in a fright lest people should not be able to make a living.

TESMAN.

Good gracious, my dear, we are talking about poor Ejlert Lövborg.

HEDDA.

[*Looks sharply at him.*] Ah? [*Sits in the arm-chair by the stove, and asks, indifferently.*] What is the matter with *him?*

TESMAN.

Well, he certainly ran through all his property long ago. And he can't write a new book every year. Eh? Well—then I do seriously ask, what is to become of him?

BRACK.

Perhaps I can tell you a little about that.

TESMAN.

Really?

BRACK.

You must remember that he has relatives who have considerable influence.

TESMAN.

Oh, unfortunately his relatives have entirely washed their hands of him.

BRACK.

They used to call him the hope of the family.

TESMAN.

Yes, they used to, yes! But he has forfeited all that.

HEDDA.

Who knows? [*Smiles slightly.*] Up there in Sheriff Elvsted's family they have restored him——

BRACK.

And then this book that has been published——

TESMAN.

Yes, yes, we can only hope that they may be willing to help him in one way or another. I have just written to him, Hedda, dear; I asked him to drop in this evening.

BRACK.

But, my dear friend, you are coming to my bachelor party this evening. You promised you would, on the quay last night.

HEDDA.

Had you forgotten that, Tesman?

TESMAN.

Yes, the truth is I had forgotten it.

BRACK.

Besides, you may rest perfectly sure that he will not come.

TESMAN.

Why do you think that? Eh?

BRACK.

[*Loitering a little, rises and rests his hands on the back of the chair.*] Dear Tesman—and you too, Mrs. Tesman—I am not justified in leaving you in ignorance about a matter which—which——

TESMAN.

Which concerns Ejlert?

BRACK.

Both you and him.

TESMAN.

But, dear Judge, let us know what it is!

BRACK.

You must be prepared for your appointment perhaps not taking place quite so soon as you desire and expect.

TESMAN.

[*Jumping up uneasily.*] Has anything happened to prevent it? Eh?

BRACK.

The possession of the post might possibly depend on the result of a competition——

TESMAN.

Competition! Fancy that Hedda!

HEDDA.

[*Leans farther back in her chair.*] Ah!

TESMAN.

But with whom? For you never mean to say with——

BRACK.

Yes, that's just it. With Ejlert Lövborg.

TESMAN.

[*Clasps his hands together.*] No, no—that is perfectly inconceivable. Absolutely impossible. Eh?

BRACK.

H'm—it may come to be matter of experience with us.

TESMAN.

No, but, Judge Brack—that would show the most incredible want of consideration for me! [*Gesticulating.*] Yes, for—consider—I am a married man! We married on my prospects, Hedda and I. Gone off and spent a lot of money. Borrowed money from Aunt Julie too. For, good Lord! I had as good as a promise of the appointment. Eh?

BRACK.

Well, well, well—and you will get the appointment all the same. But there will be a contest first.

HEDDA.

[*Motionless in the arm-chair.*] Think, Tesman—it will be almost like a kind of game.

TESMAN.

But, dearest Hedda, how can you sit there and be so calm about it?

HEDDA.

[*As before.*] I am not doing so at all. I am perfectly excited about it.

BRACK.

In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it is best that you should know how matters stand. I mean—before you carry out those little purchases that I hear you are intending.

HEDDA.

That can make no difference.

BRACK.

Really? That is another matter. Good-by. [*To Tesman.*] When I take my afternoon walk, I shall come in and fetch you.

TESMAN.

Oh, yes, yes——

HEDDA.

[*Lying back, stretches out her hand.*] Good-by, Judge. And come soon again.

BRACK.

Many thanks. Good-by, good-by.

TESMAN.

[*Follows him to the door.*] Good-by, dear Judge! You must really excuse me.

[JUDGE BRACK *goes out through the hall-door.*]

TESMAN.

[*Crosses the floor.*] Oh, Hedda—one should never venture into fairy-land. Eh?

HEDDA.

[*Looks at him and smiles.*] Is that what you are doing?

TESMAN.

Yes, dear—there is no denying it—it was an adventure in fairyland to go and get married and settle into a house on mere empty prospects.

HEDDA.

Perhaps you are right about that.

TESMAN.

Well, at all events we have our comfortable home, Hedda! Fancy—the home that we both went and dreamed about. Raved about, I may almost say. Eh?

HEDDA.

[*Rises slowly and wearily.*] That was the agreement, that we should be in society. Keep house.

TESMAN.

Yes, good Lord! how I have looked forward to that! Fancy, to see you as a hostess—in a select circle! Eh? Yes, yes, yes, for the present we two

must keep ourselves very much to ourselves, Hedda. Merely see Aunt Julie now and then. Oh, my dear! it was to have been so very, very different——!

HEDDA.

Of course I shall not have a liveried servant now, at first.

TESMAN.

Oh, no—unfortunately. We can't possibly talk about keeping a man servant, you see.

HEDDA.

And the horse for riding, that I was to have——

TESMAN.

[*Horrified.*] The horse for riding!

HEDDA.

I shall not think of having now.

TESMAN.

No, good gracious!—I should rather think not!

HEDDA.

[*Crosses the floor.*] Well, *one* thing I have to amuse myself with meanwhile.

TESMAN.

[*Beaming with joy.*] Oh, God be praised and thanked for that! And what may that be, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA.

[*At the doorway, looks at him with her hand concealed.*] My pistols, George.

TESMAN.

[*In an agony.*] The pistols!

HEDDA.

[*With cold eyes.*] General Gabler's pistols.

[*She goes through the back room out to the left.*]

TESMAN.

[*Runs to the doorway and shouts after her.*] No, for goodness sake, dearest Hedda, don't touch the dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh?

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

The room at TESMAN'S, *as in the first act, only that the pianoforte is taken away, and an elegant writing-table, with a book-case, is put in the place of it. A smaller table is placed close to the sofa, to the left. Most of the bouquets of flowers have been removed.* MRS. ELVSTED'S *bouquet stands on the larger table in the front of the floor. It is afternoon.*

HEDDA, *dressed to receive callers, is alone in the room. She stands by the open glass door, and loads a revolver. The fellow to it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing-table.*

HEDDA.

[*Looks down the garden, and shouts.*] Good-day, again, Judge!

JUDGE BRACK.

[*Is heard from below.*] The same to you, Mrs. Tesman!

HEDDA.

[*Lifts the pistol and aims.*] I am going to shoot you, Judge Brack!

BRACK.

[*Shouts out below.*] No, no, no—don't stand there aiming at me!

HEDDA.

That's the result of coming in the back way.
[*She fires.*]

BRACK.

[*Near.*] Are you perfectly mad?

HEDDA.

Oh, my God! Did I hit you?

BRACK.

[*Still outside.*] Don't play such silly tricks!

HEDDA.

Then come in, Judge.

JUDGE BRACK, *in morning dress, comes in through the glass door. He carries a light overcoat on his arm.*

BRACK.

What the devil are you doing with that revolver? What are you shooting?

HEDDA.

Oh, I was only standing and shooting up into the blue sky.

BRACK.

[*Takes the pistol gently out of her hand.*] Allow me, Mrs. Tesman. [*Looks at it.*] Ah!—I know this well. [*Looks around.*] Where is the case? Ah, yes. [*Puts the pistol into it, and closes it.*] For we are not going to have any more of that tomfoolery to-day.

HEDDA.

Well, what in the name of goodness would you have me do to amuse myself?

BRACK.

Have you had no visitors?

HEDDA.

[*Shuts the glass door.*] Not a single one. All our intimate friends are still in the country.

BRACK.

And is not Tesman at home, either?

HEDDA.

[*Stands at the writing-table, and shuts the pistol-case up in the drawer.*] No. Directly after lunch he ran off to his aunt's, for he did not expect you so early.

BRACK.

H'm. I ought to have thought of that. It was stupid of me.

HEDDA.

[*Turns her head and looks at him.*] Why stupid?

BRACK.

Because, if I had thought of it, I would have come here a little—earlier.

HEDDA.

[*Crosses the floor.*] Yes, you would then have found nobody at all. For I have been in and dressed myself for the afternoon.

BRACK.

And there is not so much as a little crack of a door that one could have parleyed through?

HEDDA.

You forgot to arrange for that.

BRACK.

That was stupid of me, too.

HEDDA.

Now let us sit down here and wait, for Tesman is sure not to be home for a good while yet.

BRACK.

Well, well—good Lord, I shall be patient.

[HEDDA *sits in the sofa corner.* BRACK *lays his paletot over the back of the nearest chair and sits down, but keeps his hat in his hand. Short pause. They look at one another.*]

HEDDA.

Well?

BRACK.

[*In the same tone.*] Well?

HEDDA.

It was I who asked first.

BRACK.

[*Bends forward a little.*] Yes, let us have a little chat together, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

[*Leans farther back in the sofa.*] Does it not seem to you a perfect age since we had a talk together last? Oh, yes; that chatter yesterday evening and this morning—I don't count that as anything.

BRACK.

But between ourselves? *Tête-à-tête*, do you mean?

HEDDA.

Oh, yes. That sort of thing.

BRACK.

Every single day I have been here, longing to have you home again.

HEDDA.

And all the time I have been wishing the same thing.

BRACK.

You? Really, Mrs. Hedda? And I, who fancied you were having such a delightful time on your journey.

HEDDA.

Oh, you can imagine that.

BRACK.

But that is what Tesman always said in his letters.

HEDDA.

Yes, *he!* For him, the nicest thing in the world is to go and rummage in libraries. And to sit and copy out of old pages of parchment—or whatever it may happen to be.

BRACK.

[*Rather maliciously.*] Well, that is his business in the world—or partly, at least.

HEDDA.

Yes, it is. And then one may, perhaps—but *I!* Oh, no, dear Judge. I have been horribly bored.

BRACK.

[*Sympathetically.*] Do you really mean that? In serious earnest?

HEDDA.

Yes. You can fancy for yourself. For a whole half year not to meet a single person who knows anything about *our* set, and whom one can talk to about our own affairs.

BRACK.

No, no—that *I* should feel was a great deprivation.

HEDDA.

And then, what is the most intolerable of all——

BRACK.

Well?

HEDDA.

Everlastingly to be in the company of—of one and the same——

BRACK.

[*Nods in approval.*] Late and early — yes. Fancy—at all possible times.

HEDDA.

I said everlastingly.

BRACK.

Yes. And yet, with our excellent Tesman, I should have thought that one could have managed——

HEDDA.

Tesman is—a professional person, my dear.

BRACK.

Can't deny that.

HEDDA.

And professional persons are not amusing to travel with. Not in the long run, at least.

BRACK.

Not even—the professional person—one is *in love with?*

HEDDA.

Ugh!—don't use that hackneyed phrase.

BRACK.

[*Startled.*] What now, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA.

[*Half in laughter, half in anger.*] Yes, just you try it for yourself! To hear talk about the history of civilization from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night——

BRACK.

Everlastingly——

HEDDA.

Yes, yes, yes! And then about the domestic industries of the Middle Ages. That is the most hideous of all!

BRACK.

[*Looks searchingly at her.*] But tell me, how am I really to understand that——? H'm.

HEDDA.

That I and George Tesman made up a pair of us, do you mean?

BRACK.

Well, let us express it so.

HEDDA.

Good Lord! do you see anything so wonderful in that?

BRACK.

Both yes and no, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

I had really danced till I was tired, my dear Judge. My time was over. Oh, no; I won't exactly say that—nor think it, either.

BRACK.

You have positively no reason whatever for thinking so.

HEDDA.

Oh—reason. [*Looks searchingly at him.*] And George Tesman—he must be admitted to be a presentable person in every respect.

BRACK.

Presentable! I should rather think so.

HEDDA.

And I do not discover anything actually ridiculous about him. Do you?

BRACK.

Ridiculous? No-o, that is not quite the word I should use.

HEDDA.

Well, but he is an awfully industrious collector, all the same! I should think it was possible that in time he would be quite a success.

BRACK.

[*Looks inquiringly at her.*] I supposed you thought, like everybody else, that he was going to be a very distinguished man.

HEDDA.

[*With a weary expression.*] Yes, I did. And then he would go and make such a tremendous fuss about being allowed to provide for me. I did not know why I should not accept it.

BRACK.

No, no. Looked at from that point of view——

HEDDA.

It was more than my other friends in waiting were willing to do, Judge.

BRACK.

[*Laughs.*] Yes. I cannot positively answer for all the others; but, as far as regards myself, you know very well that I have always nourished a—a

certain respect for the marriage tie. Generally speaking, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

[*Mocking.*] I never formed any expectations with respect to you.

BRACK.

All that I wish for is to have a pleasant, confidential circle of associates, whom I can serve by word and deed, and be allowed to go in and out among—as a tried friend——

HEDDA.

Of the man of the house, do you mean?

BRACK.

[*Bows.*] To say the truth—most of all of the lady. But next to her, of the husband, of course. Do you know that such a—let me say such a three-cornered arrangement—is really a great comfort to all parties.

HEDDA.

Yes, I have often realized the want of a third, while we have been travelling. Ugh! to sit tête-à-tête in the coupé.

BRACK.

Happily, the wedding journey is over now——

HEDDA.

[*Shakes her head.*] The journey will be a long one—a long one yet. I have merely stopped at a station on the route.

BRACK.

Well, then one jumps out. And one amuses one's self a little, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

I shall never jump out.

BRACK.

Really, never?

HEDDA.

No. For there is always somebody here, who——

BRACK.

[*Laughing.*] Who looks at one's legs, do you mean?

HEDDA.

Just that.

BRACK.

Well, but, dear me——

HEDDA.

[*With a forbidding gesture.*] Don't like it. So I shall stay there sitting—where I now am. Tête-à-tête.

BRACK.

Well, but then a third person gets in and joins the couple.

HEDDA.

Ah well! That is another question.

BRACK.

A tried, experienced friend——

HEDDA.

Entertaining one with all sorts of lively subjects——

BRACK.

And not a trace of the professional person!

HEDDA.

[*Audibly drawing in her breath.*] Yes, that certainly is a relief.

BRACK.

[*Hears the outer door opened, and gives a glance.*] The triple alliance is concluded.

HEDDA.

[*Whispers.*] And so the train starts again.

GEORGE TESMAN, *in a gray walking-suit and soft felt hat, comes in from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets.*

TESMAN.

[*Walks up to the table at the settee.*] Puf! It was pretty hot, dragging all these things here. [*Puts the books down.*] I am all in a perspiration, Hedda. Well, well — so you have come, my dear Judge? Eh? Bertha did not tell me that.

BRACK.

[*Rises.*] I came up through the garden.

HEDDA.

What books are those you have brought?

TESMAN.

[*Stands and turns over the pages.*] Some new professional publications I was obliged to get.

HEDDA.

Professional publications?

BRACK.

Aha! they are professional publications, Mrs. Tesman.

[BRACK *and* HEDDA *exchange a confidential smile.*]

HEDDA.

Do you need any more professional publications?

TESMAN.

Yes. *My* dear Hedda, one can never have too many. One must follow what is written and printed.

HEDDA.

Yes, one must.

TESMAN.

[*Handling the books.*] And look here; I have got Ejlert Lövborg's new book too. [*Passes it to her.*] Do you care to glance at it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA.

No, many thanks. Or—yes, perhaps I will presently.

TESMAN.

I looked through it a little as I came along.

BRACK.

Well, what do you think of it—as a professional man?

TESMAN.

I think it is wonderful how thoughtfully it is worked out. He never wrote so well before. [*Collects the books in a heap.*] But now I will carry all these in. It will be a pleasure to cut them all open! And I must change my clothes a little. [*To*

BRACK.] We don't need to start just this moment? Eh?

BRACK.

Oh, dear no; there is not the slightest hurry.

TESMAN.

Very well, then I will take my time. [*Goes off with the books, but pauses in the doorway and turns.*] By the way, Hedda, Aunt Julie is not coming to see you this evening.

HEDDA.

Why not? Is it that affair of the hat which prevents her?

TESMAN.

Oh, dear no. How can you think such a thing of Aunt Julie? Fancy——! But Aunt Rina is so awfully poorly, you see.

HEDDA.

She is always that.

TESMAN.

Yes, but to-day she was worse than usual, poor thing.

HEDDA.

Well, then it was perfectly reasonable that the other should stay with her. I will put up with it.

TESMAN.

And you cannot imagine how awfully pleased Aunt Julie was, too, because you looked so well after your journey.

HEDDA.

[*Aside, rises.*] Oh, those everlasting aunts!

TESMAN.

What?

HEDDA.

[*Goes to the glass doors.*] Nothing.

TESMAN.

By-by, then.

[*He goes through the back-room out to the right.*]

BRACK.

What was that you were saying about a hat?

HEDDA.

Oh! it was only something about Miss Tesman yesterday. She threw her hat down upon a chair. [*Looks at him and smiles.*] And so I pretended to think it was the servant-maid's.

BRACK.

[*Shakes his head.*] But, dear Mrs. Hedda, how could you do it? Such a nice old lady!

HEDDA.

[*Nervously, crosses the floor.*] Yes, you see, it just takes me like that all of a sudden. And then I *can't* help doing it. [*Throws herself down into the arm-chair near the stove.*] Oh, I don't know how I am to explain it.

BRACK.

[*Behind the arm-chair.*] You are not really happy; that is what is the matter.

HEDDA.

[*Looks in front of her.*] I don't know why I should be—happy. Or can you perhaps tell me?

BRACK.

Yes; among other reasons because you have got just the home that you were wishing for.

HEDDA.

[*Looks up at him and laughs.*] Do you, too, believe in that story of the wish?

BRACK.

Is there nothing in it, then?

HEDDA.

Yes, to be sure; there is something.

BRACK.

Well?

HEDDA.

There is *this* in it, that I used Tesman to take me home from evening parties last summer.

BRACK.

Unfortunately, I lived in the opposite direction.

HEDDA.

That is true. You went in the opposite direction last summer.

BRACK.

[*Laughs.*] Shame upon you, Mrs. Hedda! Well, but you and Tesman——?

HEDDA.

Yes, well, we came by here one evening. And Tesman, poor fellow, he was at his wit's end to know what to talk about. So I thought it was too bad of such a learned person——

BRACK.

[*Smiling dubiously.*] Did you? H'm——

HEDDA.

Yes, I positively did. And so—in order to help him out of his misery—I happened, quite thoughtlessly, to say that I should like to live in this villa.

BRACK.

Nothing more than that?

HEDDA.

Not that evening.

BRACK.

But afterward?

HEDDA.

Yes. My thoughtlessness had consequences, dear Judge.

BRACK.

Unfortunately, your thoughtlessnesses only too often have, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

Thanks! But it was in this enthusiasm for Mr. Falk's villa that George Tesman and I found common ground, do you see? *That* was the cause of engagement, and marriage, and wedding-tour, and all the rest of it. Yes, yes, Judge, one builds one's nest and one has to lie in it, I was almost saying.

BRACK.

That is extraordinary. And so you really scarcely cared for this place at all?

HEDDA.

No, goodness knows I did not.

BRACK.

Yes, but now? Now that you have got it arranged like a home for you?

HEDDA.

Ugh! there seems to me to be a smell of lavender and *pot pourri* in all the rooms. But perhaps Aunt Julie brought that smell with her.

BRACK.

[*Laughing.*] No, I think that must be a relic of Mrs. Falk.

HEDDA.

Yes, it belongs to some dead person. It reminds me of flowers at a ball, the day after. [*Folds her hands behind her neck, leans back in the chair and looks at him.*] Oh, Judge, you cannot conceive how frightfully bored I shall be out here.

BRACK.

Is there no occupation you can turn to to make life interesting to you, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA.

An occupation in which there might be something attractive?

BRACK.

Of course.

HEDDA.

Goodness knows what sort of an occupation that might be. I often wonder whether—— [*Interrupts herself.*] But it will never come to anything, either.

BRACK.

Who knows? Let me hear what it is.

HEDDA.

Whether I could get Tesman to take to politics, I mean.

BRACK.

[*Laughs.*] Tesman! No, don't you know, such things as politics, they are not the sort of occupation for him, not the least.

HEDDA.

No, I believe that is so. But could I not make him take them up all the same?

BRACK.

Yes, what satisfaction would that be to you if he is not a success? Why would you have him do that?

HEDDA.

Because I am bored, I tell you. [*After a pause.*] Do you think it would be absolutely impossible for Tesman to become a cabinet minister?

BRACK.

H'm, you see, dear Mrs. Hedda, in order to become that he must, first of all, be a tolerably rich man.

HEDDA.

[*Rising impatiently.*] Yes, there you have it! It is this poverty that I have come into. [*Crosses the floor.*] It is that which makes life so miserable! So perfectly ludicrous! For that's what it is.

BRACK.

I believe, now, that the fault does not lie there.

HEDDA.

Where then?

BRACK.

In the fact that you have never lived through anything really stimulating.

HEDDA.

Anything serious, you mean?

BRACK.

Well, you may call it so, if you like. But now, perhaps, it may be coming.

HEDDA.

Oh, you are thinking about the annoyances with regard to this wretched post of professor! But that is Tesman's own affair. I shall not waste a thought on that, you may be sure.

BRACK.

No, no, never mind about that. But, suppose, now there were created what one, in the loftier style, might call more serious and more responsible claims upon you? [*Smiles.*] New claims, little Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

[*Angry.*] Be quiet. You shall never live to see anything of that sort.

BRACK.

[*Cautiously.*] We will talk about that a year hence, at the very latest.

HEDDA.

[*Shortly.*] I have no plans of that kind, Judge. Nothing that will have any claim upon me.

BRACK.

Would you not, like most other women, form plans for a vocation, such as——?

HEDDA.

[*Away near the glass door.*] Ah, hold your tongue, I tell you! It often seems to me that the only vocation I have in the world is for one single thing.

BRACK.

[*Comes closer to her.*] And what is that, if I may ask?

HEDDA.

[*Stands and looks out.*] To bore the life out of myself. Now you know it. [*Turns, looks toward the back-room and laughs.*] Yes, quite right! We have the professor.

BRACK.

[*Softly, in a warning voice.*] Now, now, now, Mrs. Hedda.

GEORGE TESMAN, *in evening dress, with gloves and hat in his hand, comes from right side through back-room.*

TESMAN.

Hedda, has anyone come with a message from Ejlert Lövborg? Eh?

HEDDA.

No.

TESMAN.

Well, you will see that he will be here himself in a little while.

BRACK.

Do you really think he will come?

TESMAN.

Yes, I am almost sure of it. For those are only flying rumors that you were repeating this morning.

BRACK.

Indeed?

TESMAN.

Yes, at all events Aunt Julie said that she never would believe that he would stand in my way after to-day. Fancy that!

BRACK.

Well, then it is all right.

TESMAN.

[*Puts his hat with his gloves in it on chair to right.*] Yes, but I must really be allowed to wait for him as long as there's a chance.

BRACK.

We have plenty of time for that. Nobody comes to me until seven o'clock—half-past seven.

TESMAN.

Well, then we can keep Hedda company till then. And keep an eye on the time. Eh?

HEDDA.

[*Carries* BRACK'S *overcoat and hat over to the settee.*] And if the worst comes to the worst Mr. Lövborg can sit here with me.

BRACK.

[*Wishes to carry the things himself.*] Oh, please don't, Mrs.——! What do you mean by the worst?

HEDDA.

If he will not go with you and Tesman.

TESMAN.

[*Looks dubiously at her.*] But, dear Hedda, do you think it would be quite the thing for him to stay here with you? Eh? Recollect that Aunt Julie can't come.

HEDDA.

No, but Mrs. Elvsted is coming. And so we three can have a cup of tea together.

TESMAN.

Yes, in *that* case, all right.

BRACK.

[*Smiles.*] And that would, perhaps, be the wisest thing for him.

HEDDA.

Why?

BRACK.

Good gracious, Mrs. Tesman, you have teased me often enough about my little bachelor parties. You ought not to associate with any but men of the highest principles, you used to say.

HEDDA.

But Mr. Lövborg has the highest principles possible now. A sinner that repents——

BERTHA *appears at the hall-door.*

BERTHA.

Please, ma'am, there's a gentleman that wishes to——

HEDDA.

Yes, show him in.

TESMAN.

[*Aside.*] I am certain it is he! Fancy that!

[EJLERT LÖVBORG *comes in from the hall. He is slim and thin; the same age as* TESMAN, *but looks older and somewhat worn. Hair and beard dark-brown; face long, pale, but with red patches on the cheek-bones. He is dressed in an elegant, black, perfectly new visiting suit. Dark gloves and tall hat in his hand. He remains standing in the neighborhood of the door and bows hastily. Seems a little embarrassed.*]

TESMAN.

[*Goes to him and shakes hands.*] Well, dear Ejlert, so we really meet once more!

EJLERT LÖVBORG.

[*Speaking in a low voice.*] Thank you for your letter. [*Approaches* HEDDA.] May I venture to hope that you, too, will shake hands with me, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA.

[*Shakes hands with him.*] Welcome, Mr. Lövborg. [*With a gesture.*] I don't know whether you two gentlemen——?

LÖVBORG.

[*Bowing slightly.*] Mr. Justice Brack, I believe.

BRACK.

[*In the same way.*] Certainly. Some years ago.

TESMAN.

[*To* LÖVBORG, *with his hands on his shoulders.*] And now, Ejlert, you are to feel exactly as if you were at home. Isn't he, Hedda? For I hear you are going to settle down here in town. Eh?

LÖVBORG.

I want to.

TESMAN.

Well, that is very natural. Listen, I have got your new book. But the truth is I have not had it long enough to read it through yet.

LÖVBORG.

You may spare yourself that trouble.

TESMAN.

What do you mean by that?

LÖVBORG.

Oh, there is not anything much in it.

TESMAN.

No, fancy! you yourself say that?

BRACK.

But it is being tremendously praised, I hear.

LÖVBORG.

That is what I wanted. And so I wrote the book in such a way that everybody could agree with it.

BRACK.

Very sagacious.

TESMAN.

Yes, but—dear Ejlert——!

LÖVBORG.

For my object now is to rebuild a position for myself. Begin afresh.

TESMAN.

[*Slightly embarrassed.*] Ah! you wish to do that? Eh?

LÖVBORG.

[*Smiles, puts his hat down, and takes a packet wrapped up in paper out of his coat pocket.*] But when this is published, George Tesman, you must read this. For *this* is the real thing. What I am part of myself.

TESMAN.

Indeed! And what may that be?

LÖVBORG.

This is the continuation.

TESMAN.

The continuation? Of what?

LÖVBORG.

Of the book.

TESMAN.

Of the new book?

LÖVBORG.

Certainly.

TESMAN.

Yes; but, Ejlert, that comes down to our days!

LÖVBORG.

Yes, it does. And this treats of the future.

TESMAN.

Of the future? But, good gracious, we don't know anything about that!

LÖVBORG.

No. But there are several things though can be said about it all the same. [*Opens the packet.*] You will see here——

TESMAN.

That is not your handwriting.

LÖVBORG.

I have dictated it. [*Turns over the pages.*] It is divided into two sections. The first is about the civilizing forces of the future. And the other [*goes on turning the pages*] is about the civilizing progress of the future.

TESMAN.

Extraordinary! It would never have occurred to me to write about that.

HEDDA.

[*At the glass door. Drums on the panes.*] H'm —no, no!

LÖVBORG.

[*Puts the papers back into their envelope and lays the package on the table.*] I brought it with me because I thought I would read you a little of it this evening.

TESMAN.

That was awfully nice of you. But—this evening—— [*Looks at* BRACK.] I really don't know what to say about that.

LÖVBORG.

Well, then, another time. There is no hurry.

BRACK.

I must tell you, Mr. Lövborg, there is a little gathering at my house this evening. Chiefly for Tesman, you understand.

LÖVBORG.

[*Looking for his hat.*] Ah! then I won't stay any longer.

BRACK.

No, just listen. Will you not give me the pleasure of coming too?

LÖVBORG.

[*Short and firm.*] No, I can't do that. Thank you so much.

BRACK.

Oh, now do! We shall be a little select circle. And you may depend upon it that we shall make it "lively," as Mrs. Hed—, as Mrs. Tesman says.

LÖVBORG.

I don't doubt that. But all the same——

BRACK.

You might bring your manuscript and read it to Tesman there in my house. For I have rooms enough.

TESMAN.

Yes, think, Ejlert, you might do that! Eh?

HEDDA.

[*Joining them.*] But, dear, suppose Mr. Lövborg does not wish to. I am certain Mr. Lövborg would like much better to stay here and have dinner with me.

LÖVBORG.

[*Gazes at her.*] With you, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA.

And with Mrs. Elvsted.

LÖVBORG.

Ah! [*With a gesture of refusal.*] I met her just now in the middle of the day.

HEDDA.

Did you? Yes, she is coming. And therefore it is almost a matter of necessity that you should stay, Mr. Lövborg. Or else she will have nobody to see her home.

LÖVBORG.

That is true. Yes, many thanks, Mrs. Tesman, then I will stay.

HEDDA.

Then I will just give the servant a few directions.

[*She goes over to the hall-door and rings.* BERTHA *comes in.* HEDDA *talks aside to her and points to the back room.* BERTHA *nods and goes out again.*]

TESMAN.

[*At the same time to* EJLERT LÖVBORG.] Tell me, Ejlert, is it this new subject—this about the future—which you intend to lecture about?

LÖVBORG.

Yes.

TESMAN.

For I heard at the bookseller's that you are to deliver a course of lectures here in the autumn.

LÖVBORG.

Yes, I am. You must not blame me for that, Tesman.

TESMAN.

No, of course not! But——

LÖVBORG.

I can easily understand that it must seem rather provoking to you.

TESMAN.

Oh, for my sake I cannot expect that you——

LÖVBORG.

But I wait until you have got your nomination.

TESMAN.

Are you going to wait? Yes, but—but—then are you not going to contest the post with me? Eh?

LÖVBORG.

No. I will merely triumph over you. In the popular judgment.

TESMAN.

But, good Lord, then Aunt Julie was right all along! Oh, yes, I knew *that* was how it would be! Hedda! Fancy—Ejlert Lövborg is not going to oppose us after all.

HEDDA.

[*Sharply.*] Us? Pray keep me out of it.

[*She crosses to the back room, where* BERTHA *is standing, and spreading a table-cloth with decanters and glasses on the table,* HEDDA *nods approvingly and crosses back again.* BERTHA *goes out.*]

TESMAN.

[*At the same time.*] But you, Judge Brack, what do you say to this? Eh?

BRACK.

Well, I say that honor and victory—h'm—they may be monstrous fine things——

TESMAN.

Yes, of course, they may be. At the same time——

HEDDA.

[*Looks at* TESMAN *with a cold smile.*] I think that you stand there and look as if you were thunderstruck.

TESMAN.

Yes—that's about it—I almost fancy——

BRACK.

But that was a thunder-storm that hung over us, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA.

[*Points to the back room.*] Won't you gentlemen go in and take a glass of cold punch?

BRACK.

[*Looks at his watch.*] As a stirrup-cup? Well, that won't be a bad idea.

TESMAN.

Splendid, Hedda! Perfectly splendid! In such a happy mood as I now feel in——

HEDDA.

You too, I hope, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG.

[*Refusing.*] No, many thanks. Not for me.

BRACK.

But, good Lord, cold punch isn't poison, that I know of.

LÖVBORG.

Perhaps not for every one.

HEDDA.

I shall keep Mr. Lövborg company while you go in.

TESMAN.

Yes, yes, dear Hedda, do that.

[*He and* BRACK *go into the back room, sit down, drink punch, smoke cigarettes, and talk cheerfully during the following dialogue.* EJLERT LÖVBORG *remains standing near the stove.* HEDDA *goes to the writing-table.*]

HEDDA.

[*Raising her voice a little.*] Now, I will show you some photographs, if you like. For Tesman and I—we made a tour through the Tyrol as we came home.

[*She comes with an album, which she places on the table near the sofa and sits on the upper corner of the latter.* EJLERT LÖVBORG *goes closer, stops, and gazes at her. Then he takes a chair and sits down at her left side with his back to the farther room.*]

HEDDA.

[*Opens the album.*] Do you see this mountain landscape, Mr. Lövborg? This is the Ortler group. Tesman has written it underneath. You see it here: The Ortler Group, near Meran.

LÖVBORG.

[*Who has gazed at her all this time, says slowly in a low tone of voice.*] Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA.

[*Glances quickly at him.*] Well! Hush!

LÖVBORG.

[*Repeats softly.*] Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA.

[*Looks in the album.*] Yes, that used to be my name. Then—when we two knew one another.

LÖVBORG.

And henceforward—and all my life long—I must get out of the habit of saying Hedda Gabler.

HEDDA.

[*Goes on turning over the leaves.*] Yes, you must. And I think you ought to practise it in time. The sooner the better, I think.

LÖVBORG.

[*With resentful expression.*] Hedda Gabler married! And to—George Tesman!

HEDDA.

Yes, that's how it is.

LÖVBORG.

Oh, Hedda, Hedda! how could you throw yourself away like that?

HEDDA.

[*Looks sharply at him.*] Now! None of that here.

LÖVBORG.

None of what, do you mean?

TESMAN *comes in and approaches the sofa.*

HEDDA.

[*Hears him coming and says indifferently.*] And this, Mr. Lövborg, this is down from the Ampezzo Valley. Just look at the peaks there. [*Looks kindly at* TESMAN.] What are these wonderful peaks called, dear?

TESMAN.

Let me see. Oh! Those are the Dolomites.

HEDDA.

So they are, yes. Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Lövborg.

TESMAN.

Hedda, dear, I was just going to ask whether we should not bring you in a little punch? For yourself at all events? Eh?

HEDDA.

Oh, thanks. And one or two biscuits as well, perhaps.

TESMAN.

No cigarettes?

HEDDA.

No.

TESMAN.

Very well.

[*He goes into the back room and out to right.* BRACK *sits there and now and then glances at* HEDDA *and* LÖVBORG.]

LÖVBORG.

[*In a low voice, as before.*] Answer me, Hedda. How could you go and do all this?

HEDDA.

[*Apparently absorbed in the album.*] If you go on saying "thou" to me I shall not talk to you any more.

LÖVBORG.

May I not say "thou" when we are by ourselves?

HEDDA.

No. You may be allowed to think it. But you must not say it.

LÖVBORG.

Ah! I understand. It clashes with your love—for George Tesman.

HEDDA.

[*Glances at him and smiles.*] Love? No, that *is* a joke!

LÖVBORG.

Not love then?

HEDDA.

No sort of unfaithfulness, either! I won't hear of anything of that kind.

LÖVBORG.

Hedda, just give me an answer about one thing.

HEDDA.

Hush!

TESMAN, *with a serviette, comes from the back room.*

TESMAN.

Come, then! Here are the good things.
[*He spreads the cloth on the table.*]

HEDDA.

Why, do you lay the cloth yourself?

TESMAN.

[*Fills up the glasses.*] Yes, because it seems such fun to wait upon you, Hedda.

HEDDA.

But now, you have filled both glasses. And Mr. Lövborg does not wish for any.

TESMAN.

No, but Mrs. Elvsted is sure to come in a minute.

HEDDA.

Yes, that is true—Mrs. Elvsted——

TESMAN.

Had you forgotten her? Eh?

HEDDA.

We were so absorbed in these photographs. [*Shows him a picture.*] Do you recollect this little mountain-village?

TESMAN.

Ah, that is the one below the Brenner Pass! It was there that we stayed all night——

HEDDA.

And met all those entertaining tourists.

TESMAN.

Yes, to be sure, it was *there*. Fancy—if we could have had *you* with us, Ejlert! Well!

[*He goes in again and sits down by* BRACK.]

LÖVBORG.

Just give me an answer about one thing, Hedda——

HEDDA.

Well?

LÖVBORG.

Was there no love in your relation to *me* either? Not a splash—not a gleam of love over that either?

HEDDA.

I wonder if there really was? For my part I feel that we were two very good comrades. Two thoroughly intimate friends. [*Smiles.*] You especially were awfully frank.

LÖVBORG.

It was you who wished it to be so.

HEDDA.

When I look back upon it, there was certainly something beautiful, something fascinating—something spirited it seems to me there was about—

about that secret intimacy — that comradeship, which no living human being had a suspicion of.

LÖVBORG.

Yes, isn't that so, Hedda! Was there not? When I used to come up to see your father of a morning—and the general sat away by the window and read the papers—with his back to us.

HEDDA.

And we, on the settee.

LÖVBORG.

Always with the same illustrated newspaper in front of us——

HEDDA.

For want of an album, yes.

LÖVBORG.

Yes, Hedda—and when I used to confess to you. Told you about myself, things that nobody else knew in those days. Sat there and admitted that I had been out on the loose for whole days and

nights. Out on the loose for days and days. Ah, Hedda, what power was it in you that forced me to acknowledge things like that?

HEDDA.

Do you think it was a power in me?

LÖVBORG.

Yes, how else can I explain it? And all those —those mysterious questions that you used to ask me——

HEDDA.

And which you understood so thoroughly.

LÖVBORG.

That you could sit and ask such things! Quite boldly.

HEDDA.

Mysteriously, if you please.

LÖVBORG.

Yes, but boldly, all the same. Ask me—about things of that kind.

HEDDA.

And that you could answer, Mr. Lövborg.

LÖVBORG.

Yes, that is just what I do not understand—now looking back upon it. But tell me then, Hedda—was not love at the basis of that relation? Had not you an idea that you could wash me clean, if only I came to you in confession? Was it not so?

HEDDA.

No, not quite.

LÖVBORG.

Then what actuated you?

HEDDA.

Can't you understand that a young girl—if it can be done in—in secret——

LÖVBORG.

Well?

HEDDA.

Might want very much to get a peep into a world which——

LÖVBORG.

Which ——?

HEDDA.

Which she is not allowed to know anything about?

LÖVBORG.

Then that was it?

HEDDA.

That too. That too—I almost fancy.

LÖVBORG.

Comradeship in the desire of life. But why could it not be *that* as well?

HEDDA.

That was your own fault.

LÖVBORG.

It was you who were to blame.

HEDDA.

Yes, there was the impending danger that the real thing would assert itself in our relation. You

ought to be ashamed, Ejlert Lövborg; how could you take advantage of me—of your bold comrade?

LÖVBORG.

[*Wrings his hands.*] Oh, why did you not take it up in earnest! Why did you not shoot me down as you threatened to do?

HEDDA.

I was so afraid of the scandal.

LÖVBORG.

Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

HEDDA.

A frightful coward. [*Moves.*] But that was fortunate for you. And now you have found the loveliest consolation up at Elvsted's.

LÖVBORG.

I know what Thea has confided to you.

HEDDA.

And perhaps you have confided something to her about us two?

LÖVBORG.

Not a word. She is too stupid to understand that sort of thing.

HEDDA.

Stupid?

LÖVBORG.

In that kind of thing she is stupid.

HEDDA.

And I am cowardly. [*Bends nearer to him, without looking him in the face, and says in a lower tone of voice.*] But now I will confide something to *you*.

LÖVBORG.

[*Inquisitive.*] Well?

HEDDA.

That I dared not shoot you down——

LÖVBORG.

Yes?

HEDDA.

That was not my most arrant cowardice that evening.

LÖVBORG.

[*Looks at her a moment, understands, and passionately whispers.*] Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I catch a glimpse of the hidden reason of our comradeship. You and I! It was the longing for life in you, after all——

HEDDA.

[*Softly, with a keen expression.*] Take care! Don't believe anything of that! [*It begins to grow dark. The hall door is opened from outside by* BERTHA. HEDDA *shuts the album and calls out, smiling.*] Now, at last! Dearest Thea, come in!

MRS. ELVSTED *comes from the hall. She is dressed for the evening. The door is closed behind her.*

HEDDA.

[*From the sofa, holds out her arms to her.*] Dear Thea, you can't think how impatient I have been for you!

[*During this time* MRS. ELVSTED *has exchanged a slight greeting with the gentlemen in the back room, then goes across to the table, and holds out her hand to* HEDDA. EJLERT LÖVBORG *has risen. He and* MRS. ELVSTED *greet one another with a silent nod.*]

MRS. ELVSTED.

Ought I not to go in and chat a little with your husband?

HEDDA.

By no means. Let those two sit there. They will soon be off.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Are they going?

HEDDA.

Yes, they are going off to a carouse.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Rapidly to* LÖVBORG.] You as well?

LÖVBORG.

No.

HEDDA.

Mr. Lövborg—he stays with us.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Takes a chair and is going to sit down at his side.*] Oh! how nice it is to be here.

HEDDA.

No, thanks, my little Thea! Not there! You come right over here to me. I will be between you.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, just as you like.

[*She goes round the table and sits down on the sofa on the left side of* HEDDA. LÖVBORG *sits down in the chair again.*]

LÖVBORG.

[*After a short pause, to* HEDDA.] Is she not lovely to sit and look at?

HEDDA.

[*Strokes her hair lightly.*] Merely to look at?

LÖVBORG.

Yes. For we two—she and I—we are two genuine comrades. We believe implicitly in one another. And so we can sit and talk so confidentially to one another——

HEDDA.

Without any mystery, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG.

Well——

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Softly clinging to* HEDDA.] Oh, how fortunate I am, Hedda! For, fancy, he says that I inspire him too.

HEDDA.

[*Looks at her with a smile.*] No, dear, does he say that?

LÖVBORG.

And then the courage in action that she has, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, goodness! *I* courage!

LÖVBORG.

Immensely—when it refers to the comrade.

HEDDA.

Yes, *courage*, yes! If one only had it.

LÖVBORG.

What do you mean, then?

HEDDA.

Then one could perhaps manage to live one's life. [*Turns suddenly.*] But now, my dearest Thea, now you must drink up a good glass of cold punch.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, thanks, I never drink things of that kind.

HEDDA.

Well, then, you at least, Mr. Lövborg.

LÖVBORG.

Thanks, nor I either.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, nor he either!

HEDDA.

[*Looks firmly at him.*] But if I wish it?

LÖVBORG.

Can't help it!

HEDDA.

[*Laughs.*] Then I have no power over you at all, poor I?

LÖVBORG.

Not in that direction.

HEDDA.

Seriously speaking, I think you ought to do it all the same. For your own sake.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, but, Hedda——!

LÖVBORG.

Why?

HEDDA.

Or for other people's sake, I ought to say.

LÖVBORG.

Indeed?

HEDDA.

Otherwise people might easily get the impression that you did not—really—feel yourself perfectly confident—perfectly sure of yourself.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Aside.*] Oh, no, Hedda——!

LÖVBORG.

People may get whatever impression they choose for the present.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Joyfully.*] Yes, is not that so?

HEDDA.

I noticed that so plainly in Judge Brack just now.

LÖVBORG.

What did you notice?

HEDDA.

He smiled so scornfully when you dared not go in there to the table.

LÖVBORG.

Dared not! I preferred, of course, to stay here and talk to you.

MRS. ELVSTED.

That was so natural, Hedda!

HEDDA.

But the Judge could not possibly know that. And I saw that he gave a smile and glanced at Tesman when you dared not go with them to that wretched little banquet.

LÖVBORG.

Dared! Do you say that I did not dare?

HEDDA.

Not I. But that is how Judge Brack understood it.

LÖVBORG.

Well, let him.

HEDDA.

Then you will not go with them?

LÖVBORG.

I shall stay here with you and Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, Hedda, you may be sure that is best.

HEDDA.

[*Smiles and nods with approval to* LÖVBORG.] Firm as a rock, then! Rooted in principle for all times and seasons! There, that's what a man should be! [*Turns to* MRS. ELVSTED *and pats her.*] Well, was not that what I said when you came here so awfully anxious this morning?

LÖVBORG.

[*Starting.*] Anxious!

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Terrified.*] Hedda, Hedda, then——

HEDDA.

Just look yourself! It is not necessary that you should go about in this mortal dread—— [*Interrupting.*] Well, now we can all three be in high spirits!

LÖVBORG.

Ah! what is the meaning of all this, Mrs. Tesman?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Good gracious, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

HEDDA.

Be quiet! That disgusting Judge is sitting there and keeping his eye on you.

LÖVBORG.

In mortal dread? For the sake of me?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Aside, complaining.*] Oh, Hedda, now you have made me perfectly miserable!

LÖVBORG.

[*Looks steadily at her for a little while. His face is gloomy.*] Then *that* was my comrade's frank faith in me.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Beseechingly.*] Ah! dearest friend, you must listen to me first——

LÖVBORG.

[*Takes one full glass of punch, lifts it and says softly, with husky voice.*] Your health, Thea!

[*He empties the glass, puts it down and takes the other.*]

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Aside.*] O Hedda, Hedda! how could you wish for this?

HEDDA.

Wish! I! Are you mad?

LÖVBORG.

And a health to you also, Mrs. Tesman. Thanks for the truth. The living truth!

[*He drinks and wishes to refill the glass.*]

HEDDA.

[*Lays her hand upon his arm.*] There, there! No more for the moment. Remember, that you are going to the party.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, no, no!

HEDDA.

Hush! They are sitting and watching you.

LÖVBORG.

[*Puts the glass away.*] Thea, now tell the truth.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes!

LÖVBORG.

Had the Sheriff any idea you were following me?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Wringing her hands.*] Oh, Hedda, do you hear what he asks?

LÖVBORG.

Was it an agreement between him and you that you should come up to town and spy after me? Perhaps it was the Sheriff himself that made you do it? Aha! Perhaps he thought he could make use of me in his office again! Or was it at the card-table he missed me?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Aside, moaning.*] Oh, Lövborg, Lövborg——

LÖVBORG.

[*Snatches a glass and tries to fill it.*] A health to the old Sheriff too!

HEDDA.

[*Refusing.*] No more now. Remember, you have to go and read aloud to Tesman.

LÖVBORG.

[*Quieter, pushes the glass away.*] That was stupid of me, Thea, that was. To take it up in such a way,

I mean. Don't be angry with me, my dear, dear comrade. You shall see—you and other people—that if I was fallen now I am up again! By *your* help, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Beaming with delight.*] Oh, thank God!

[*Meanwhile* BRACK *has looked at his watch. He and* TESMAN *get up and come into the drawing-room.*]

BRACK.

[*Takes his hat and overcoat.*] Yes, Mrs. Tesman, it is now time for us.

HEDDA.

That is all right.

LÖVBORG.

[*Gets up.*] For me, too, Mr. Justice.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Aside entreating.*] Oh, Lövborg, don't do it!

HEDDA.

[*Pinches her arm.*] They hear you!

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Gives a slight scream.*] Au!

LÖVBORG.

[*To* BRACK.] You were so kind as to invite me.

BRACK.

Well, will you come, after all?

LÖVBORG.

Yes, many thanks.

BRACK.

I shall be most delighted.

LÖVBORG.

[*Draws the packet of MS. toward him, and says to* TESMAN.] For I should like to submit one or two points to you before I send it off.

TESMAN.

No, fancy! that will be amusing! But, dear Hedda, how will Mrs. Elvsted be seen home? Eh?

HEDDA.

Oh, that can always be managed somehow.

LÖVBORG.

[*Looks toward the ladies.*] Mrs. Elvsted? Of course I am coming back to fetch her. [*Closer.*] About ten o'clock, Mrs. Tesman? How will that do?

HEDDA.

Yes, certainly. That will do splendidly.

TESMAN.

Well, then, that is all right. But you must not expect me so early, Hedda.

HEDDA.

Oh, my dear, stay as long—as long as ever you like.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*In concealed agony.*] Mr. Lövborg, I shall be waiting here until you come.

LÖVBORG.

[*With his hat in his hand.*] Of course, Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK.

And now we are off for a happy day, gentlemen! I hope we shall make it "lively," as a certain lovely lady puts it.

HEDDA.

Ah! if only the lovely lady could be present invisibly.

BRACK.

Why invisibly?

HEDDA.

To hear a little of your unadulterated liveliness, Mr. Justice.

BRACK.

[*Laughs.*] I would not advise the lovely lady to do that.

TESMAN.

[*Also laughs.*] Well, that is a good joke, Hedda! Fancy that!

BRACK.

Now good-by, good-by, ladies.

LÖVBORG.

[*Bows as he goes.*] About ten o'clock, then.

[BRACK, LÖVBORG, *and* TESMAN *go out through the hall door. At the same time* BERTHA *comes from the back room with a lighted lamp, which she puts down on the drawing-room table and goes out the same way.*]

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Has risen and walks about uneasily.*] Hedda, Hedda, what will be the end of all this?

HEDDA.

Ten o'clock—when he is coming to fetch you. I see him before me. With vine-leaves in his hair. Hot and bold——

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, if it only might be so.

HEDDA.

And you see he has regained power over himself. He is now a free man for the rest of his life.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, goodness, yes—if he might only come back as you see him.

HEDDA.

So, and not otherwise will he come! [*Rises and approaches her.*] You may doubt him as long as you will. I believe in him. And now we shall try——

MRS. ELVSTED.

There is something mysterious about you, Hedda.

HEDDA.

Yes, there is. I wish for once in my life to have power over the fate of a human being.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Have you not got that?

HEDDA.

Haven't—and never have had.

MRS. ELVSTED.

But not over your husband?

HEDDA.

Oh, that would not be worth taking much trouble about. Oh, if you could only know how poor I am. And you are allowed to be so rich. [*Looks passionately at her.*] I believe I shall scorch your hair off, after all.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Let me go! let me go! I am afraid of you, Hedda.

BERTHA.

[*In the doorway.*] Tea is served in the dining-room, ma'am.

HEDDA.

Very well. We are coming.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, no, no! I wish to go home alone! Now, at once!

HEDDA.

Nonsense! You shall have tea first, you little simpleton. And then, at ten o'clock, comes Ejlert Lövborg, with vine-leaves in his hair.

[*She drags* MRS. ELVSTED *almost by force to the doorway.*]

END OF SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

The room at TESMAN'S. *The curtains are drawn in front of the doorway and of the glass door. The lamp, with a shade over it, burns, half turned down, on the table. In the stove, the door of which is open, there has been a fire, which is now almost out.*

MRS. ELVSTED, *wrapped in a great beaver cloak, and with her feet on a footstool, sits close to the stove, sunken back in the arm-chair.* HEDDA *lies, dressed, asleep on the sofa, with a rug over her.*

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*After a pause, sits up quickly in her chair and listens keenly. Then sinks wearily back again and softly murmurs.*] Not yet! O God! O God!—not yet!

BERTHA *comes in cautiously, listening, through the hall door. She has a letter in her hand.*

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Turns and whispers sharply.*] Well, has anyone been here?

BERTHA.

[*Aside.*] Yes, just now a girl came with this letter.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Quickly, holding out her hand.*] A letter! Give it me!

BERTHA.

No, it is for the Doctor, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Ah!

BERTHA.

It was Miss Tesman's maid who brought it. I will put it here on the table.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, do.

BERTHA.

[*Lays down the letter.*] I had better put out the lamp. For it is merely being wasted.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, put it out. It will soon be light now.

BERTHA.

[*Puts it out.*] It *is* quite light, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, broad daylight! And not come home yet.

BERTHA.

Oh, goodness! I thought that that was what would happen.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Did you think so?

BERTHA.

Yes, when I saw that a certain person was come to town again—and went off with them. We have heard a good deal about that gentleman before now.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Don't talk so loud. You will wake your mistress.

BERTHA.

[*Looks at the sofa and sighs.*] No, let her sleep, poor thing. Shall I make up the fire a little?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Thanks, not for me.

BERTHA.

Very well, then.

[*She goes out softly through the hall-door.*

HEDDA.

[*Wakes up at the shutting of the door, and looks up.*] What is it?

MRS. ELVSTED.

It was only the servant.

HEDDA.

[*Looks round.*] Ah! in here! Yes, I recollect now. [*Sits up on the sofa, stretches herself, and rubs her eyes.*] What o'clock is it, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED.

It is past seven, now.

HEDDA.

When did Tesman come?

MRS. ELVSTED.

He has not come yet.

HEDDA.

Not come home yet?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Rises.*] Nobody has come.

HEDDA.

And we who sat here and watched and waited up till four o'clock——

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Wrings her hands.*] And *what* I expected of him!

HEDDA.

[*Yawns and says, with her hand before her mouth:*] Ah, yes, we might have spared ourselves that trouble.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Have you been able to sleep at all?

HEDDA.

Oh, yes. I believe I have had a very good sleep. Didn't you?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Not one moment. I could not, Hedda. It was absolutely impossible for me.

HEDDA.

[*Rises and goes across to her.*] There, there, there! There is nothing to be anxious about. I know perfectly well what has happened.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, what do you suppose, then? Can you tell me?

HEDDA.

Well, of course they went on drinking at the Judge's for a frightful time——

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, dear, yes—they did to be sure. But at the same time——

HEDDA.

And so, you see, Tesman did not like to come home and make a noise and ring us up in the middle of the night. [*Laughs.*] Perhaps did not particularly wish to show himself, either, in such a very jovial condition.

MRS. ELVSTED.

But, my dear, where can he have gone?

HEDDA.

He is gone up to his aunt's, of course, and has had out his sleep there. They keep up his old room.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, he can't be there. For a letter has just come for him from Miss Tesman. There it is.

HEDDA.

Really? [*Looks at the address.*] Yes, it certainly is from Aunt Julie herself. Well, then, he

must have stayed all night at the Judge's house. And Ejlert Lövborg—he is sitting, with vine-leaves in his hair, and reading aloud.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, Hedda, you merely go on saying what you don't yourself believe a word of.

HEDDA.

You really are a little ninny, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, yes, I am sorry to say I suppose I am.

HEDDA.

And so deadly tired out you look.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, I am deadly tired, too.

HEDDA.

Well, then, you shall do what I tell you. You shall go into my room and lie down on the bed a little.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, no, no, I should not sleep if I did.

HEDDA.

Yes, you certainly would.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, but your husband is sure to come home soon, now. And then I shall want to know at once.

HEDDA.

I will tell you when he comes.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Will you promise me that, Hedda?

HEDDA.

Yes, you can depend upon that. Just go in and sleep until then.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Thanks. Well, I will try to.

[*She goes in through the back room.*]

[HEDDA *goes to the glass door and draws back the curtains. Broad daylight enters the room. Thereupon she takes a little hand-mirror which stands on the writing-table, and arranges her hair. Then goes to the hall-door and presses the button of the bell.* BERTHA *soon after appears at the door.*]

BERTHA.

Do you want anything, ma'am?

HEDDA.

Yes, you must make up the fire in the stove. I am chilled to the bone.

BERTHA.

The room shall be warm in a minute.

[*She draws the embers together, and puts more fuel on.*]

BERTHA.

That was a ring at the street door, ma'am.

HEDDA.

Well, then go and open it. I will attend to the stove.

BERTHA.

It will soon burn up.

[*She goes out through the hall-door.* HEDDA *kneels on the footstool and puts several pieces of fuel into the stove.*]

GEORGE TESMAN *comes, after a short delay, in from the hall. He looks tired and rather serious. Walks on the tips of his toes toward the doorway and is going to slip in between the curtains.*

HEDDA.

[*At the stove, without looking up.*] Good-morning!

TESMAN.

[*Turns.*] Hedda! [*Comes nearer.*] But what in the world are you up so early for? Eh?

HEDDA.

Yes, I am up awfully early to-day.

TESMAN.

And I, who felt so certain you would be still in bed and asleep! Fancy, Hedda!

HEDDA.

Don't talk so loud. Mrs. Elvsted is lying in my room.

TESMAN.

Has Mrs. Elvsted been here all night?

HEDDA.

Yes, nobody came to fetch her.

TESMAN.

No, nobody did.

HEDDA.

[*Shuts the stove-door and rises.*] Well, did you amuse yourself at the Judge's?

TESMAN.

Have you been anxious about me? Eh?

HEDDA.

No, it never occurred to me to be that. But I asked you whether you had amused yourself.

TESMAN.

Yes, tolerably. For once. But most at the beginning, I think now. Because then Ejlert read aloud to me. We arrived an hour too soon—fancy! And Brack had so many things to arrange. But then Ejlert read.

HEDDA.

Really? Let me hear.

TESMAN.

[*Sits down on an ottoman by the stove.*] No, Hedda, you could never believe what a book it is! It is certainly one of the most astonishing things that have been written. Fancy that!

HEDDA.

Yes, yes, I don't care about that.

TESMAN.

I will tell you one thing, Hedda. When he had finished reading—something ugly came over me.

HEDDA.

Something ugly?

TESMAN.

I sat and envied Ejlert, for having been able to write like that. Fancy that, Hedda.

HEDDA.

Yes, yes, I can understand that.

TESMAN.

And then, you know, with all the talent that he has, unfortunately he is utterly irreclaimable all the same.

HEDDA.

You mean, I suppose, that he has more of the courage of life than the others?

TESMAN.

Good Lord, no! He can scarcely preserve any moderation in his pleasures, you see.

HEDDA.

And what came of it all—at last?

TESMAN.

Well, I almost think that it might have been called a bacchanalian orgy, Hedda.

HEDDA.

Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

TESMAN.

Vine-leaves? No, I did not see anything of that sort. But he kept up a long, confused story about the woman who had inspired him in his work. Yes, that was how he expressed himself.

HEDDA.

Did he name her?

TESMAN.

No, he did not do that. But I can't help thinking that it must be Mrs. Elvsted. Do you agree?

HEDDA.

Well, where did you leave him?

TESMAN.

On the way back. We broke up—the last of us —at the same time. And Brack walked with us to get a little fresh air. And then, you see, we all agreed to take Ejlert home. Yes, for he was completely overcome.

HEDDA.

He was?

TESMAN.

But now for the most extraordinary part of it, Hedda! Or the sad part, I ought to say. Oh! — I am almost ashamed—for Ejlert's sake—to tell you about it.

HEDDA.

Well? Well?

TESMAN.

While coming back, you see, I was by accident a little behind the others. Merely for a minute or two, fancy!

HEDDA.

Yes, yes, good God! But——

TESMAN.

And when I was hurrying after the others what do you think I found at the corner of the road? Eh?

HEDDA.

No, how can I possibly tell!

TESMAN.

Be sure you don't tell anybody, Hedda. Do you hear? Promise me that, for Ejlert's sake. [*Takes a packet wrapped in paper out of his coat pocket.*] Fancy—I found this.

HEDDA.

Is not that the packet which he had with him when he was here yesterday?

TESMAN.

Yes, it is the whole of his precious, irreparable manuscript! And that he had gone and dropped without having noticed it. Just fancy that, Hedda! So sad!

HEDDA.

But why did you not give him back the parcel at once.

TESMAN.

No, I dared not do that—in the condition in which he was.

HEDDA.

Did you not tell any of the others that you had found it, either?

TESMAN.

Oh, no, indeed. You may be sure I never would do that, for Ejlert's sake.

HEDDA.

So that nobody knows that you have Ejlert Lövborg's papers?

TESMAN.

No. And nobody must know either.

HEDDA.

What have you said to him since?

TESMAN.

I had no more conversation whatever with him. For when we came into the streets he and one or two others went quite away from us. Fancy that!

HEDDA.

Ah! Then they must have taken him home.

TESMAN.

Yes, they were going to do that. And Brack went back to his own house.

HEDDA.

And where have you been racketing since then?

TESMAN.

Well, I and some of the others we went up to the rooms of one of these jolly chaps and had an early cup of coffee with him. Or a very late cup of coffee it might more properly be called. Eh? But when I have rested a little—and when I can suppose that Ejlert, poor fellow, has had his sleep out, I must go over to his place to take this back to him.

HEDDA.

No, don't give it from yourself. Not at once, I mean. Let me read it first.

TESMAN.

No, dear darling Hedda, I really dare not do that.

HEDDA.

Do you not dare?

TESMAN.

No, for you can well imagine how perfectly in despair he will be when he wakens and misses the manuscript. For he has no copy of it, you must know! He said so himself.

HEDDA.

[*Looks searchingly at him.*] Can't a thing of that kind, then, be written over again? Once more?

TESMAN.

No, I don't believe that would ever answer. For the inspiration—you see——

HEDDA.

Yes, yes—of course there is that. [*Rejecting the idea.*] But, by the way, there is a letter here for you.

TESMAN.

No, fancy that!

HEDDA.

[*Hands him the letter.*] It came early this morning.

TESMAN.

From Aunt Julie! What can it be? [*Puts the packet of MS. on the other ottoman, opens the letter, runs through it and jumps up.*] Oh, Hedda, she writes to say that poor Aunt Rina is dying!

HEDDA.

Well, that was to be expected.

TESMAN.

And that if I wish to see her once again I must make haste. I will rush off to them at once.

HEDDA.

[*Suppresses a smile.*] Must you *rush !*

TESMAN.

Oh, dearest Hedda, if you only could make up your mind to come with me! Do!

HEDDA.

[*Rises and says wearily.*] No, no, don't ask me to do such a thing. I don't want to look upon disease and death. Let me be kept from everything that is ugly.

TESMAN.

Yes, good Lord, then——! [*Walks about.*] My hat?—my overcoat? Ah! in the hall. I do hope that I shall not arrive too late, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA.

Well, then rush——!

BERTHA.

Mr. Justice Brack is outside asking if he may come in.

TESMAN.

At this hour! No, I cannot possibly receive him.

HEDDA.

But I can. [*To* BERTHA.] Show Mr. Brack in.

[BERTHA *goes.*]

HEDDA.

[*Rapidly, whispering.*] The packet, Tesman!

[*She snatches it from the ottoman.*]

TESMAN.

Yes, give it me!

HEDDA.

No, no, I will hide it till you come back.

[*She goes up to the writing-table and pushes it into the book-case.* TESMAN *fidgets about and cannot get his gloves on.*]

JUDGE BRACK *enters from the hall.*

HEDDA.

[*Nods to him.*] Well, you *are* an early bird.

BRACK.

Yes, don't you think so? [*To* TESMAN.] Are you going out, then?

TESMAN.

Yes, it is absolutely necessary I should go over to my aunts'. Fancy! the sick one is dying, poor thing.

BRACK.

Oh, dear me, is she really? But in that case you must not let me detain you. At such a serious moment——

TESMAN.

Yes, I must really run. Good-by, good-by!

[*He hurries out through the hall-door.*]

HEDDA.

It must have been more than lively at your house last night, Mr. Brack.

BRACK.

I have not got out of my clothes, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

Haven't you really?

BRACK.

No, as you see. But how much has Tesman told you of the night's festivities?

HEDDA.

Oh, some tiresome stuff. Merely that he had been up somewhere drinking coffee.

BRACK.

I have heard all about that coffee-drinking. Ejlert Lövborg was not of the party, I believe?

HEDDA.

No, they had already taken him home.

BRACK.

Tesman as well?

HEDDA.

No, but some of the others, he said.

BRACK.

[*Smiles.*] George Tesman is really an innocent creature, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

Oh, my goodness, I should think he was. But is there any mystery in it, then?

BRACK.

Yes, there is to a certain extent.

HEDDA.

Really! Let us sit down, dear Judge. Then you will talk more comfortably.

[*She sits at the left side of the table.* BRACK *close to her.*]

HEDDA.

Well! now what is it?

BRACK.

I had particular reasons for tracking my guests —or, more properly, a portion of my guests last night.

HEDDA.

And was Ejlert Lövborg one of them?

BRACK.

I must confess that he was.

HEDDA.

Now you are making me fearfully inquisitive.

BRACK.

Do you know where he and some of the others spent the rest of the night, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA.

If you are going to tell me, tell me.

BRACK.

Dear me, it can be very well told. Yes, they took part in a singularly animated *soirée*.

HEDDA.

Of the lively kind?

BRACK.

Of the liveliest conceivable.

HEDDA.

Let me know a little more about it, Judge.

BRACK.

Lövborg had received an invitation beforehand, he too. I knew all about that. But then he had declined to come. For now, as you know, he has become a reformed character.

HEDDA.

Up at Sheriff Elvsted's, yes. But then he did go, after all?

BRACK.

Yes, you see, Mrs. Hedda, unfortunately the spirit came upon him last evening up at my house——

HEDDA.

Yes, I hear he became very inspired.

BRACK.

Inspired to a somewhat violent degree. Well, he changed his mind, I suppose. For we men, we are unfortunately not so firm in our principles as we ought to be.

HEDDA.

Oh, I am sure you are an exception, Mr. Brack. But now about Lövborg—— ?

BRACK.

Well, to make a long story short, he found a haven at last in Miss Diana's parlors.

HEDDA.

Miss Diana's ?

BRACK.

It was Miss Diana who gave the party. To a select circle of admirers and female friends.

HEDDA.

Is she a red-haired girl ?

BRACK.

Just so.

HEDDA.

Such a sort of—opera-singer?

BRACK.

Oh, yes—that as well. And with it all a mighty huntress—after the gentlemen—Mrs. Hedda. You must have heard of her. Ejlert Lövborg was one of her warmest protectors in his influential days.

HEDDA.

And how did all this end?

BRACK.

Not quite so amiably, I must confess. Miss Diana passed from the tenderest greetings to mere loggerheads——

HEDDA.

Toward Lövborg?

BRACK.

Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him. He declared that his pocket-book

was gone. And other things, too. In short, he made a horrible spectacle of himself.

HEDDA.

And what did that lead to?

BRACK.

That led to a general rumpus between all the ladies and gentlemen. Happily, the police came up at last.

HEDDA.

What, did the police come?

BRACK.

Yes. But it was a costly joke for that mad fellow, Ejlert Lövborg.

HEDDA.

How?

BRACK.

He made a violent resistance. Then he struck one of the constables in the ear, and tore his coat to pieces. So then he was walked off to the police-station.

HEDDA.

How do you know all this?

BRACK.

From the police themselves.

HEDDA.

[*Looks before her.*] So that is how it has all happened. Then he did not have vine-leaves in his hair?

BRACK.

Vine-leaves, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA.

[*Changes her tone.*] But now, tell me, Judge, why, really, do you go about in this way, tracking and spying after Ejlert Lövborg?

BRACK.

In the first place, it can be no matter of indifference to me that when it comes before the magistrates it should appear that he came straight from my house.

HEDDA.

Then it will come before the magistrates?

BRACK.

Of course. Besides, whatever my reason may have been, I thought that it was only my duty, as a friend of the house, to let you and Tesman have a full account of his nocturnal exploits.

HEDDA.

But precisely why, Mr. Brack?

BRACK.

Well, because I have a lively suspicion that he will use you as a sort of screen.

HEDDA.

No, but how can you think of such a thing?

BRACK.

Oh, good Lord, we are not blind, Mrs. Hedda. Just look here! This Mrs. Elvsted, she is in no hurry to leave town.

HEDDA.

Well, if there was anything between those two, there are many other places where they can meet.

BRACK.

No family. Every respectable house will from this time forth be closed to Ejlert Lövborg.

HEDDA.

And so ought mine to be, you think?

BRACK.

Yes. I confess that it will be more than distressing for me if this gentleman fixes himself here. If he, as a superfluous and an irrelevant element should force himself into——

HEDDA.

Into the triple alliance?

BRACK.

Just so. It would be the same for me as being homeless.

HEDDA.

So, to be sole cock of the walk, that is your object?

BRACK.

[*Nods slowly and lowers his voice.*] Yes, that is my object. And that object I will fight for with all the means I have at my disposal.

HEDDA.

[*While her smile fades away.*] You are certainly a dangerous person, when it comes to the point.

BRACK.

Do you think so?

HEDDA.

Yes, I begin to think so now. And I am glad of it with all my heart—so long as you do not in any way get a hold over me.

BRACK.

[*Laughs ambiguously.*] Yes, yes, Mrs. Hedda, you are perhaps right about that. Who knows

whether I may not be man enough to get such a hold.

HEDDA.

No, but listen to me, Mr. Brack! It is almost as though you were sitting there and threatening me.

BRACK.

[*Rises.*] Oh, far from it! The triple alliance you see is best confirmed and defended by voluntary action.

HEDDA.

That is my opinion, too.

BRACK.

Yes, and now I have said what I wanted to say, and I must be getting back. Good-by, Mrs. Hedda.

[*He goes to the glass door.*]

HEDDA.

Are you going through the garden?

BRACK.

Yes, it is the nearer way for me.

HEDDA.

Yes, and then it is the back way too.

BRACK.

Very true. I have no objection to back ways. At the proper moments they may be piquant enough.

HEDDA.

When there is firing with shot going on.

BRACK.

[*In the door, laughs to her.*] Oh! one does not shoot one's domestic fowls!

HEDDA.

[*Laughs also.*] Oh, no! if one has not more than the one, then——

[*They nod, as they laugh, and say good-by. He goes. She shuts the door after him.* HEDDA *stands for a while, gravely, and looks out. Then she goes and peeps in through the curtains to the back room. Then goes to the writing-table, takes* LÖVBORG'S

packet down from the book-case, and begins to turn the pages. BERTHA'S *voice is heard loud in the hall.* HEDDA *turns and listens. Then rapidly locks the packet up in the drawer and puts the key in the plate of the inkstand.* EJLERT LÖVBORG, *with his overcoat on and his hat in his hand, bursts the hall-door open. He looks somewhat confused and excited.*]

LÖVBORG.

[*Turning toward the hall.*] And I tell you I must and I will go in! There!

[*He shuts the door, turns, sees* HEDDA; *he immediately regains his self-command and bows.*]

HEDDA.

[*At the writing-table.*] Well, Mr. Lövborg, you are pretty late in coming to fetch Thea.

LÖVBORG.

Or else it is pretty early to be calling on you. I hope you will excuse me.

HEDDA.

How do you know she is still here?

LÖVBORG.

They told me at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

HEDDA.

[*Crosses to the drawing-room table.*] Did you notice how the people looked when they said that?

LÖVBORG.

[*Looks inquiringly at her.*] How the people looked?

HEDDA.

I mean whether they seemed to think it was odd?

LÖVBORG.

[*Suddenly comprehending.*] Oh, yes, that is quite true! I drag her down with me! At the same time I did not notice anything. Has Tesman not got up yet?

HEDDA.

No, I don't think so.

LÖVBORG.

When did he get home?

HEDDA.

Awfully late.

LÖVBORG.

Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA.

Yes, I heard that you had had a very jolly time at Mr. Brack's.

LÖVBORG.

Nothing else?

HEDDA.

No, I don't think so. Besides I was so fearfully sleepy.

MRS. ELVSTED *comes in through the curtains in the background.*

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Goes toward him.*] Ah, Lövborg! At last——!

LÖVBORG.

Yes, at last! And too late!

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Sees the anguish in his face.*] What is too late?

LÖVBORG.

All is too late now. It is all over with me.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, no, no—don't say that!

LÖVBORG.

You will say it yourself, when you have heard——

MRS. ELVSTED.

I will hear nothing!

HEDDA.

Perhaps you would like best to talk to her alone? If so, I'll go.

LÖVBORG.

No, stay—you too. I beg you to stay.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, but I don't wish to hear anything, I tell you.

LÖVBORG.

It is not last night's adventures that I wish to speak about.

MRS. ELVSTED.

What is it, then?

LÖVBORG.

It is about this—that our paths must now be parted.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Parted?

HEDDA.

[*Involuntarily.*] I knew it!

LÖVBORG.

For I have no more use for you, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED.

And you can stand here and say that! No more use for me! Can't I help you just as I did before? Can't we go on working together?

LÖVBORG.

I don't mean to do any work after to-day.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*In despair.*] Then what shall I do with my life?

LÖVBORG.

You must try to live your life as if you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED.

But I cannot do that!

LÖVBORG.

Try whether you can, Thea. You must go home again.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*In agitation.*] Never in this world! Where you are, there will I also be! I will not allow myself to be hunted away like that! I will stay here where I am! Be with you, when the book comes out.

HEDDA.

[*Aside, in suspense.*] Ah! the book—yes!

LÖVBORG.

[*Looks at her.*] My book and Thea's. For that's what it is.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes. I feel it is that. And therefore I have a right to be with you when it comes out! I wish to see to it that esteem and honor are poured out over you again. And the joy—the joy, that I will share with you.

LÖVBORG.

Thea—our book will never come out.

HEDDA.

Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED.

Never come out?

LÖVBORG.

Can never come out.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*In agonized foreboding.*] Lövborg—what have you done with the sheets?

HEDDA.

[*Looks excitedly at him.*] Yes, the sheets——?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Where have you put them?

LÖVBORG.

Oh, Thea—don't ask me that.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, yes, I will know. I have a right to be told at once.

LÖVBORG.

The sheets! Well then—the sheets, I have torn them into a thousand fragments.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Screams.*] Oh, no, no——!

HEDDA.

[*Involuntarily.*] But it is not——!

LÖVBORG.

[*Looks at her.*] Not true, do you think?

HEDDA.

[*Recovers herself.*] Yes, indeed. Of course. When you yourself say it. But it sounded so improbable.

LÖVBORG.

True all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Wrings her hands.*] Oh, God! Oh, God! Hedda—torn his own work to pieces.

LÖVBORG.

I have torn my own life to pieces. So that I might well tear my life's work to pieces too——

MRS. ELVSTED.

And did you do that last night?

LÖVBORG.

Yes, I tell you! Into a thousand pieces. And scattered them on the fjord. Far out! There is,

in any case, fresh salt water there. Let them drift out into it. Drift in the tide and wind. And then in a little while they sink. Deeper and deeper. As I am doing, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Do you know, Lövborg, that this about the book —all my life it will present itself to me, as if you had killed a little child.

LÖVBORG.

You are right in that. It is a sort of infanticide.

MRS. ELVSTED.

But how could you then—? I had my part, too, in the child.

HEDDA.

[*Almost inaudible.*] Ah, the child——

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Breathing heavily.*] It's all over. Yes, yes, now I am going, Hedda.

HEDDA.

But you are not going away from town?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh! I don't know myself what I shall do. Everything is dark before me now.

[*She goes out through the hall door.*]

HEDDA.

[*Stands and waits a little.*] You are not going to go home with her, then, Lövborg?

LÖVBORG.

I? Through the streets? Do you suppose people ought to see her walking with me?

HEDDA.

I don't know what else happened last night. But is it so absolutely irretrievable?

LÖVBORG.

It is not merely last night. I know that perfectly well. But it is *this*, that I don't want to live that kind of life either. Not now over again. It is the courage of life and the defiance of life that she has snapped in me.

HEDDA.

[*Looking in front of her.*] The sweet little simpleton has had her fingers in the destinies of a man. [*Looks at him.*] But how could you be so heartless to her, all the same?

LÖVBORG.

Oh, don't say that it was heartless!

HEDDA.

Go and destroy what has filled her thoughts for such a long, long time! You don't call that heartless?

LÖVBORG.

To you I can speak the truth, Hedda.

HEDDA.

The truth?

LÖVBORG.

Promise me first—give me your word upon it, that what I now confide to you, you will never let Thea know.

HEDDA.

You have my word upon it.

LÖVBORG.

Good. Then I will tell you that that was not true which I stood here and declared.

HEDDA.

That about the sheets?

LÖVBORG.

Yes. I have not torn them into fragments. I have not thrown them into the fjord either.

HEDDA.

No, no—But—where are they, then?

LÖVBORG.

I have destroyed them all the same! To all intents and purposes, Hedda.

HEDDA.

I don't understand that.

LÖVBORG.

Thea said that what I had done was the same to her as murdering a child.

HEDDA.

Yes, that's what she said.

LÖVBORG.

But, to kill one's child—that is not the worst thing you can do to it.

HEDDA.

That not the worst?

LÖVBORG.

No. That is the worst which I wished to shield Thea from hearing about.

HEDDA.

And what then is this worst?

LÖVBORG.

Suppose now, Hedda, that a man—about such an hour in the morning as this—after a wild night of

carouse, came home to the mother of his child and said: Listen—I have been here and there. In this place and that place. And I have taken your child with me. To this place and that place. I have lost the child. Utterly lost it. The Devil knows into whose hands it has fallen. Who may have had their fingers in it.

HEDDA.

Ah! but, after all—this was nothing more than a book——

LÖVBORG.

The pure soul of Thea was in that book.

HEDDA.

Yes, I understand that.

LÖVBORG.

And therefore you understand also that between her and me there is no future henceforward.

HEDDA.

And which way will you go?

LÖVBORG.

No way. Merely see how I can make an end altogether. The sooner the better.

HEDDA.

[*A step nearer.*] Ejlert Lövborg—now listen to me. Could you not contrive—that it should be done beautifully?

LÖVBORG.

Beautifully? [*Smiles.*] With vine-leaves in my hair, as you used to fancy——

HEDDA.

Oh, no! The vine-leaf—I don't think anything more about that! But beautifully, all the same! Just for once—Good-by! You must go now. And don't come here any more.

LÖVBORG.

Good-by, Mrs. Tesman. And give a message to George Tesman from me. [*He is going.*]

HEDDA.

No, wait! You shall take with you a keepsake from me.

[*She goes to the writing-table and opens the drawer and pistol-case. Comes back to* LÖVBORG *with one of the pistols.*]

LÖVBORG.

[*Looking at her.*] This? Is *this* the keepsake?

HEDDA.

[*Nods slowly.*] Do you recollect it? It was aimed at you once.

LÖVBORG.

You should have used it then.

HEDDA.

Look here! *You* use it now.

LÖVBORG.

[*Puts the pistol into his breast pocket.*] Thanks!

HEDDA.

And do it beautifully, Ejlert Lövborg. Only promise me that!

LÖVBORG.

Good-by, Hedda Gabler.

[*He goes out through the hall door. She then goes to the writing-table and takes out the packet with the manuscript, peeps into the envelope, pulls one or two of the leaves half out, and glances at them. She then takes the whole of it and sits down in the arm-chair by the stove. She holds the packet in her lap. After a pause, she opens the door of the stove, and then the packet also.*]

HEDDA.

[*Throws one of the sheets into the fire and whispers to herself.*] Now I am burning your child, Thea! You with your curly hair! [*Throws several sheets into the fire.*] Your child and Ejlert Lövborg's child. [*Throws the rest in.*] Now I am burning—am burning the child.

END OF THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

Same room at TESMAN'S. *It is evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The back-room is lighted up by the chandelier over the table. The curtains in front of the glass door are drawn.*

HEDDA, *in black, goes to and fro over the floor in the darkened room. Then she passes into the back-room, and crosses over to the left side. There are heard some chords on the piano. Then she comes in again and enters the drawing-room.* BERTHA *comes from the left, through the back-room, with a lighted lamp, which she puts on the table in front of the settee in the drawing-room. Her eyes are red with weeping, and she has black ribbands in her cap. She walks quietly and carefully out to the left.* HEDDA *goes to the glass door, moves the curtain a little to one side, and looks out into the darkness. Soon after,* MISS TESMAN *arrives, in black, with hat and veil on, in from the hall.* HEDDA *goes toward her with her hands outstretched.*

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, Hedda, I come in the colors of sorrow. For at last my poor sister has found rest.

HEDDA.

I know it already, as you see. Tesman sent me a card.

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, he promised me he would. But I thought, all the same, that to Hedda, here—in the house of life—I ought myself to be the herald of death.

HEDDA.

That was very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN.

Oh! Rina ought not to have left us just *now*. Hedda's house ought not to be weighed down with grief at such a time as this.

HEDDA.

[*Diverting her.*] She died very quietly, didn't she, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN.

Oh, so exquisitely—so peacefully she departed. And then, the unspeakable joy that she saw George

once more, and was able really to say good-by to him! Has he not come home yet?

HEDDA.

No. He wrote that I must not expect him at once. But do sit down.

MISS TESMAN.

No, thanks, dear, blessed Hedda! I should so like to. But I have so little time. Now I have to lay her out and adorn her as well as I can. She shall go down to her grave looking really nice.

HEDDA.

Can't I help you with anything?

MISS TESMAN.

Oh! don't you think of that! Hedda Tesman must not touch such work! Nor let her thoughts fasten upon it either. Not at this time, no!

HEDDA.

Oh! one's thoughts—they don't obey such masters——

MISS TESMAN.

[*Continuing.*] Yes, dear Lord, that is how the world goes. At home with me we must now be sewing linen for Rina. And here there will soon

be seen sewing too, I can very well imagine. But that will be of another sort, that will, thank God!

GEORGE TESMAN *enters through the hall-door.*

HEDDA.

Well, that is a good thing, you have come at last.

TESMAN.

Are you here, Aunt Julie? With Hedda? Fancy that!

MISS TESMAN.

I was just going away, my dear boy. Well, have you arranged everything as you promised me?

TESMAN.

No, I am really afraid I have forgotten half of it, dear. I shall rush over to you again to-morrow. For to-day my head seems absolutely bewildered. I can't keep my thoughts together.

MISS TESMAN.

But, dear George, you must not take it in this way.

TESMAN.

What? How do you mean?

MISS TESMAN.

You must rejoice even in grief. Glad for what has happened. As I am.

TESMAN.

Oh! yes, yes. You are thinking about Aunt Rina.

HEDDA.

It will be lonesome for you now, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN.

The first few days, yes. But that won't last very long; dear Rina's little room will not always be empty, that I know.

TESMAN.

Indeed? Who is going to move into it? Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Oh, there is always some poor invalid or other, who needs to be looked after and tended, unfortunately.

HEDDA.

Will you really take such a burden upon you?

MISS TESMAN.

Burden? God forgive you, child, that has never been a burden to me.

HEDDA.

But now if a stranger should come, then surely——

MISS TESMAN.

Oh! one soon becomes friends with sick people. And I haven't any such great need to have anyone to live for, either. No, God be praised and thanked —here in the house there will be this and that going on that an old aunt may have a hand in.

HEDDA.

Oh, don't speak about our house.

TESMAN.

Yes, fancy, what a lovely time we three can have together, if——

HEDDA.

If——?

TESMAN.

[*Unquiet.*] Oh, nothing. That will arrange itself all right. Let us hope so. Eh?

MISS TESMAN.

Yes, yes. You two have something to chat about, I can well understand. [*Smiles.*] And Hedda has also something to tell you, perhaps, George. Good-

by! Now I must go home to Rina. [*Turns at the door.*] Goodness, how strange it is to think that Rina is at home with me and is with poor Jochum as well!

TESMAN.

Yes, fancy that, Aunt Julie! Eh?

[MISS TESMAN *goes out through the hall-door.*]

HEDDA.

[*Follows* TESMAN *coldly and critically with her eyes.*] I almost think that the death upsets you more than it does her.

TESMAN.

Oh, it is not the death alone. It is Ejlert whom I am so uneasy about.

HEDDA.

[*Quickly.*] Is there anything new about him?

TESMAN.

I wanted to run up and tell him this afternoon that the manuscript was in safe-keeping.

HEDDA.

Well? Did you not find him?

TESMAN.

No. He was not at home. But afterward I met Mrs. Elvsted, and she told me that he had been here early this morning.

HEDDA.

Yes, directly after you went.

TESMAN.

And he had said that he had torn his manuscript to bits. Eh?

HEDDA.

Yes, that's what he declared.

TESMAN.

Well, but he must have been completely out of his mind. And then did you not give it back to him either, Hedda?

HEDDA.

No, he did not get it.

TESMAN.

But you told him that we had it?

HEDDA.

No. [*Quickly.*] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

TESMAN.

No, I would not do that. But you ought to have told him himself. Fancy if, in despair, he should go away and do himself an injury! Let me have the manuscript, Hedda! I will rush round with it to him at once. Where is the package?

HEDDA.

[*Cold and immovable, supported by the arm-chair.*] I haven't got it any longer.

TESMAN.

Haven't got it? What in the world do you mean?

HEDDA.

I have burned it all up—the whole of it.

TESMAN.

[*Breaks into a shriek.*] Burned! Burned, Ejlert's manuscript!

HEDDA.

Don't shriek so. The servant might hear you.

TESMAN.

Burned! But, good God——! No, no, no—this is absolutely impossible.

HEDDA.

Well, it is so, anyhow.

TESMAN.

But do you know what you have been doing, Hedda? It is an illegal proceeding with goods found. Think of that! Yes, if you only ask Judge Brack, he will tell you what it is.

HEDDA.

It is certainly best that you should say nothing about it, neither to the Judge nor to anyone else.

TESMAN.

Yes, but how could you go and do anything so monstrous? How could such a thing come into your mind? How could it occur to you? Answer me that. Eh?

HEDDA.

[*Suppresses an almost imperceptible smile.*] I did it for your sake, George.

TESMAN.

For my sake!

HEDDA.

When you came home yesterday and said that he had been reading aloud to you——

TESMAN.

Yes, yes, well?

HEDDA.

Then you acknowledged that you envied him the work.

TESMAN.

Oh, my goodness, I didn't mean that literally.

HEDDA.

All the same, I could not bear the idea that anyone else should put you into the shade.

TESMAN.

[*In an outburst between doubt and joy.*] Hedda, oh! is that the truth you are saying! Yes, but—yes, but—I never noticed that your love took that form before. Fancy that!

HEDDA.

Well, it is best that you should know—that just at this time—— [*Breaks off.*] No, no—you can ask Aunt Julie for yourself. She will give you information enough.

TESMAN.

Oh, I almost believe that I understand you, Hedda! [*Clasps his hands together.*] No, good lord, is *that* possible! Eh?

HEDDA.

Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

TESMAN.

[*Laughing in excess of joy.*] The servant! No, you really are fun, Hedda! The servant—is just Bertha! I will go out and tell Bertha myself.

HEDDA.

[*Wrings her hands as if in despair.*] Oh, it's killing me, it's killing me, all this!

TESMAN.

What is, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA.

[*Coldly, in self-command.*] All this ridiculous nonsense, George.

TESMAN.

Ridiculous? That I am so intensely happy! But at the same time—perhaps it is not worth while that I should say anything to Bertha.

HEDDA.

Oh, no, why should you not do so?

TESMAN.

No, no, not yet. But Aunt Julie must undoubtedly be told. And then, that you begin to call me George as well! Fancy that! Oh! Aunt Julie, she will be so happy, so happy!

HEDDA.

When she hears that I have burned Ejlert Lövborg's papers for your sake?

TESMAN.

No, that's true too! That affair with the papers, of course nobody must know about that. But that you burned for me, Hedda—Aunt Julie must really have her share in that! But now I should like to know whether that sort of thing is usual with young wives? Eh?

HEDDA.

You ought to ask Aunt Julie about *that* too, it seems to me.

TESMAN.

Yes, I really will do so when I have an opportunity. [*Looks uneasy and pensive again.*] No, but —no, but the manuscript then! Good lord, it is frightful to think of poor Ejlert, all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED, *dressed as during her first visit, with hat and mantle, comes in through the hall-door.*

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Greets them hurriedly and says, with agitation.*] Oh, dear Hedda, don't be angry with me for coming again.

HEDDA.

What has happened to you, Thea?

TESMAN.

Is there anything wrong again with Ejlert Lövborg? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, yes—I am so dreadfully afraid that a misfortune has happened to him.

HEDDA.

[*Seizes her arm.*] Ah!—do you think so?

TESMAN.

No, but, good lord—how can you imagine such a thing, Mrs. Elvsted!

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, for I heard them talking about him in the *pension*, just as I came in. Oh, the most hideous

rumors about him are going around the town today.

TESMAN.

Yes, fancy, I heard that too! And I can bear witness that he walked straight home and went to bed. Fancy!

HEDDA.

Well, what did they say in the *pension?*

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh! I could not get any clear account! Either they knew nothing exact, or else—They stopped talking when they saw me. And I did not dare to ask.

TESMAN.

[*Uneasily about the floor.*] We must hope—we must hope that you heard wrong, Mrs. Elvsted!

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, no, I am certain that it was him they were talking about. And then I heard them say something about the hospital or——

TESMAN.

The hospital!

HEDDA.

No—that is quite impossible!

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, I was so deadly frightened about him. And then I went up to his lodgings and asked for him *there.*

HEDDA.

Could you persuade yourself to do that, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, what else could I do? For it did not seem to me that I could endure the uncertainty any longer.

TESMAN.

But you did not find him, even there? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED.

No. And the people knew nothing about his movements. He had not been home since yesterday afternoon, they said.

TESMAN.

Yesterday! Fancy they're saying that!

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, I think that nothing else is possible but that something wrong must have happened to him!

TESMAN.

What do you say, Hedda—to my going and making inquiries at various places——

HEDDA.

No, no—don't you mix yourself up in this affair.

JUDGE BRACK, *with his hat in his hand, comes in through the hall-door, which* BERTHA *opens and closes behind him. He looks grave, and bows in silence.*

TESMAN.

Oh, is that you, dear Judge? Eh?

BRACK.

Yes, of course I felt obliged to come to you this evening.

TESMAN.

I can see that you have had a message from Aunt Julie.

BRACK.

Yes, I have.

TESMAN.

Isn't it sad? Eh?

BRACK.

Well, dear Tesman, that depends on the way in which one takes it.

TESMAN.

[*Looks inquiringly at him.*] Has anything else happened?

BRACK.

Yes, there has.

HEDDA.

[*Eagerly.*] Anything distressing, Mr. Brack?

BRACK.

Again, that depends on how one takes it, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*In an involuntary outburst.*] Oh! it has something to do with Ejlert Lövborg!

BRACK.

[*Looks slightly at her.*] What makes you think that, madame? Perhaps you already know something?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Distracted.*] No, no, I don't in any way; but—

TESMAN.

But, good gracious, do tell us what it is!

BRACK.

Well, unhappily, Ejlert Lövborg has been taken to the hospital. He lies there at the point of death.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Shrieks.*] O God! O God!

TESMAN.

To the hospital! And at the point of death!

HEDDA.

[*Involuntarily.*] So quickly too!

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Wailing.*] And we, who parted in anger, Hedda!

HEDDA.

[*Whispers.*] But Thea—Thea there!

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Paying no attention to her.*] I must go to him. I must see him alive!

BRACK.

It is of no use, madame. No one may see him.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, but only tell me, what has happened to him? What is it?

TESMAN.

Yes, you don't mean to say that he has—himself—Eh?

HEDDA.

Yes, I am certain that he has.

TESMAN.

Hedda, how can you know?

BRACK.

[*Keeps his eyes fixed upon her.*] Perhaps you have guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, how horrible!

TESMAN.

Himself too! Fancy that!

HEDDA.

Shot himself!

BRACK.

Guessed right again, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Tries to be calm.*] When did it happen, Mr. Brack?

BRACK.

This afternoon, between three and four.

TESMAN.

But, good lord—where did he do it, then! Eh?

BRACK.

[*A little hesitating.*] Where? Yes, my dear Tesman—he must have done it in his own lodgings.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, that can't be right. For I was there between six and seven.

BRACK.

Well, then somewhere else. I don't exactly know. I only know he was found—He had shot himself—through the breast.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, how terrible to think of! That he should come to such an end.

HEDDA.

[*To* BRACK.] Was it through the breast?

BRACK.

Yes, as I say.

HEDDA.

Then not through the temple?

BRACK.

Through the breast, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA.

Yes, yes—the breast is also a good place.

BRACK.

What, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA.

[*Evasively.*] Oh, no, nothing.

TESMAN.

And the wound is dangerous, you say? Eh?

BRACK.

The wound is absolutely mortal. It is probably all over with him by this time.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, yes, I have a foreboding! It is all over! All over! Oh, Hedda——!

TESMAN.

But tell me—where did you learn all this?

BRACK.

[*Shortly.*] Through one of the police. One whom I had to speak to.

HEDDA.

[*Half aloud.*] At last a positive act!

TESMAN.

[*Terrified.*] God save us—Hedda, what are you saying?

HEDDA.

I say that there is something beautiful in this.

BRACK.

Hum, Mrs. Tesman——

TESMAN.

Beautiful! No, fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, Hedda, how can you talk about beauty in such a matter?

HEDDA.

Ejlert Lövborg has settled the account with himself. He has had the courage to do what—what had to be done.

MRS. ELVSTED.

No, never believe that that is what has happened. What he has done, he has done in his delirium.

TESMAN.

In despair he has done it!

HEDDA.

That he has not. I am certain of that.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, he has! In delirium! Just as when he tore our sheets to fragments.

BRACK.

[*Starting.*] The sheets? The manuscript, do you mean? Has he torn that into fragments?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, he did that last night.

TESMAN.

[*Whispers softly.*] Oh, Hedda, we shall never get clear of this.

BRACK.

H'm, that was extraordinary.

TESMAN.

[*Crosses the floor.*] Only to thing of Ejlert's going out of the world in this way! And not to leave behind him what would have given such a lasting reputation to his name——

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, if it only could be put together again!

TESMAN.

Yes, think, if it only could! I don't know what I would give——

MRS. ELVSTED.

Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

TESMAN.

What do you mean?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Searches in the pocket of her mantle.*] Look here. I hid the loose scraps which he used when he dictated.

HEDDA.

[*A step closer.*] Ah——!

TESMAN.

You have kept them, Mrs. Elvsted? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, I have them here, I took them with me when I left home. And they have been lying here in my pocket——

TESMAN.

Oh, do just let me see them!

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Passes him a bundle of small pages.*] But they are in such disorder! All higgledy-piggledy.

TESMAN.

Fancy, if we could only arrange them. Perhaps if we two set our heads together——

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, let us try, at all events.

TESMAN.

It *shall* come right! It must come right! I will dedicate my life to this task!

HEDDA.

You, George? Your life?

TESMAN.

Yes, or more properly speaking, all the time I can spare. Lord, there is no use in wailing over what has happened. Eh? We will try to quiet ourselves down as much as possible and——

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman, I will do the best I can.

TESMAN.

Well, then come here. We must see about the notices at once. Where shall we sit? Here? No, in there in the back-room. Excuse us, my dear Brack! Come with me, then, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, God—if it only might be possible!

[TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *come into the back-room. She takes off her hat and mantle. They both sit down at the table under the chandelier, and become absorbed in an eager examination of the papers.* HEDDA *crosses to the stove and sits down in the arm-chair. A little later* BRACK *crosses to her.*]

HEDDA.

[*In a low voice.*] Oh, Judge—what a relief this is about Ejlert Lövborg.

BRACK.

Relief, Mrs. Hedda? Yes, indeed, it is a relief for him——

HEDDA.

I mean, for me. A relief to know that it is still possible for an act of voluntary courage to take place in this world. Some over which there falls a veil of unintentional beauty.

BRACK.

[*Smiles.*] H'm—dear Mrs. Hedda——

HEDDA.

Oh, I know what you are going to say. For you are a kind of professional person, you too, like—well!

BRACK.

[*Looks firmly at her.*] Ejlert Lövborg has been more to you than, perhaps, you are willing to admit to yourself. Or is that a mistake of mine?

HEDDA.

I don't answer you such questions as that. I only know that Ejlert Lövborg has had the courage to live his life after his own fashion. And then now—the great act! That over which the sense of

beauty falls! That he had force and will enough to break away from the banquet of life—so early.

BRACK.

I am sorry, Mrs. Hedda—but I am obliged to destroy this pretty piece of imagination of yours.

HEDDA.

Imagination?

BRACK.

Which in any case you would soon abandon for yourself.

HEDDA.

And what is it then?

BRACK.

He has not shot himself—voluntarily.

HEDDA.

Not voluntarily?

BRACK.

No. The affair about Ejlert Lövborg does not run on quite the same lines that I drew just now.

HEDDA.

[*Excitedly.*] Have you concealed something? What is it?

BRACK.

For poor Mrs. Elvsted's sake I used a few small circumlocutions.

HEDDA.

What are they?

BRACK.

First, that he is really already dead.

HEDDA.

At the hospital?

BRACK.

Yes. And without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA.

What more have you concealed?

BRACK.

This, that the event did not occur in his room.

HEDDA.

Well, that is of no particular consequence.

BRACK.

You are mistaken. For I have to tell you—Ejlert Lövborg was found shot in—in Miss Diana's boudoir.

HEDDA.

[*Will jump up, but sinks back again.*] That is impossible, Mr. Brack! He cannot have been there again to-day!

BRACK.

He was there this afternoon. He came to beg for something, he said, which had been taken away from him. Talked wildly about a child, that was lost——

HEDDA.

Ah!

BRACK.

I thought that perhaps it might be his manuscript. But that, I hear, he himself destroyed. So that it must have been the pocketbook.

HEDDA.

Yes, no doubt. And there—so there he was found.

BRACK.

Yes, there. With a discharged pistol in his breast pocket. The shot had been fatal.

HEDDA.

In the breast—yes.

BRACK.

No—it struck him in the abdomen.

HEDDA.

[*Looks up at him with an expression of disgust.*] That too! Oh, what a curse of ridicule and of vulgarity hangs over everything that I merely touch.

BRACK.

There is one point more, Mrs. Hedda. Something which also may be looked upon as rather squalid.

HEDDA.

And what is that?

BRACK.

The pistol which he carried——

HEDDA.

[*Breathless.*] Well! What then?

BRACK.

He must have stolen it.

HEDDA.

[*Leaps up.*] Stolen! That is not true! He did not steal it!

BRACK.

No other solution is possible. He *must* have stolen it. Hush!

TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *have risen from the table in the back-room, and enter the drawing-room.*

TESMAN.

[*With the papers in both his hands.*] Hedda, dear, it is hardly possible for me to see there under the chandelier. Think of that!

BRACK.

Yes, I am thinking.

TESMAN.

Would you mind our sitting for a little while at your writing-table? Eh?

HEDDA.

Yes, as far as I am concerned. [*Rapidly.*] Now, wait! Let me clear it first!

TESMAN.

Oh, that doesn't matter at all, Hedda. There is plenty of room.

HEDDA.

No, no, let me just clear it first, I say. Carry all these things in, and put them on the piano. There!

[*She has pushed an object, covered with note-paper, under the bookcase, puts several other papers on,*

and carries the whole into the back-room. TESMAN *lays the scraps of manuscript on the writing-table and moves the lamp then from the corner table. He and* MRS. ELVSTED *sit down and proceed with their work.* HEDDA *returns.*]

HEDDA.

[*Behind* MRS. ELVSTED'S *chair, gently strokes her hair.*] Well, my sweet Thea, how goes it with Ejlert Lövborg's monument?

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Looks dispiritedly up at her.*] Oh, goodness, it will be awfully hard to make it all out.

TESMAN.

It *must* be done. There is nothing else for it. And this, to set other people's papers in order, is just the work I am fitted for.

[HEDDA *goes over to the stove and seats herself on one of the ottomans.* BRACK *stands over her, leaning on the arm-chair.*]

HEDDA.

[*Whispers.*] What was that you said about the pistol?

BRACK.

[*Softly.*] That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA.

Why must he have stolen it?

BRACK.

Because no other explanation can be possible, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.

Ah, really!

BRACK.

[*Glances at her.*] Ejlert Lövborg was here this morning, of course. Isn't that so?

HEDDA.

Yes.

BRACK.

Were you alone with him?

HEDDA.

Yes, part of the time.

BRACK.

Did you leave this room while he was here?

HEDDA.

No.

BRACK.

Just consider. Were you not out of the room a moment?

HEDDA.

Yes, perhaps just a moment—out in the hall.

BRACK.

And where was your pistol-case during that time?

HEDDA.

I had that down in——

BRACK.

Well, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA.

The case stood there away on the writing-table.

BRACK.

Have you looked there since to see whether both the pistols are there?

HEDDA.

No.

BRACK.

There is no need. I saw the pistol Lövborg had carried. And I knew it again at once from yesterday. And from before that too?

HEDDA.

Have you got it with you, perhaps?

BRACK.

No, the police have it.

HEDDA.

What will the police do with the pistol?

BRACK.

Search till they find out who was the proprietor.

HEDDA.

Do you think that that can be discovered?

BRACK.

[*Bends over her and whispers.*] No, Hedda Gabler—not so long as I hold my tongue.

HEDDA.

[*Looks shyly at him.*] And if you do *not* hold your tongue—what then?

BRACK.

[*Shrugs his shoulders.*] There is always the theory that the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA.

[*Rapidly.*] Rather die!

BRACK.

[*Smiles.*] That's what people *say*. But nobody *does* it.

HEDDA.

[*Without replying.*] And supposing that the pistol was not stolen, and the proprietor is discovered. What will happen then?

BRACK.

Yes, Hedda—then the scandal comes.

HEDDA.

The scandal——?

BRACK.

Yes, the scandal, about which you are now in such a mortal terror. You will, of course, be brought into court. Both you and Miss Diana. She will have to explain what the whole matter was about. Whether it was an accidental shot or murder. Was he trying to take the pistol out of his pocket to fire at her? And then did the shot go off? Or did she tear the pistol out of his hand, shoot him, and then push the pistol back into his pocket? That would be quite like her. For she is a stout wench, this same Miss Diana.

HEDDA.

But all this repulsive business does not affect *me*.

BRACK.

No. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Ejlert Lövborg the pistol? And

what conclusions will people form from the fact that you did give it to him?

HEDDA.

[*Lets her head sink.*] That is true. I did not think of that.

BRACK.

Well, fortunately there is no danger, so long as I hold my tongue.

HEDDA.

[*Looks up at him.*] So I am in your power, Judge. You have me bound hand and foot from this time forward.

BRACK.

[*Whispers softly.*] Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not misuse my position.

HEDDA.

All the same—entirely in your power. Subject to your desire and will. A slave. A slave, then! [*Rises impetuously.*] No—I will not endure the thought of that! Never.

BRACK.

[*Looks half-mockingly at her.*] One gets used to the inevitable.

HEDDA.

[*Returns his look.*] Yes, perhaps.

[*She crosses to the writing-table.*]

HEDDA.

[*Suppresses an involuntary smile and imitates* TESMAN'S *tone of voice.*] Well? Is it a success, George? Eh?

TESMAN.

Lord knows, dear. In any case it will be the work of entire months.

HEDDA.

[*As before.*] No, fancy that! [*Passes her hands softly through* MRS. ELVSTED'S *hair.*] Is it not a strange thing, Thea? You are sitting here with Tesman just in the same way as you used to sit with Ejlert Lövborg.

MRS. ELVSTED.

Oh, goodness, if I could only inspire your husband in the same way.

HEDDA.

Oh, that will come—in time.

TESMAN.

Yes, do you know, Hedda—it really does seem as if I was beginning to perceive something of that kind. But go and sit down again with Brack!

HEDDA.

Is there nothing I can do here to make myself useful to you two?

TESMAN.

No, nothing in the world. [*Turns his head.*] For the rest of the evening *you* must be kind enough, dear Judge, to supply Hedda with society.

BRACK.

[*With a glance at* HEDDA.] It will be an immense pleasure to me.

HEDDA.

Thanks. But I am tired this evening. I will go in and lie down on the sofa a little.

TESMAN.

Yes, do so, dear. Eh?

[HEDDA *goes into the back-room and draws the curtains to behind her. Short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance-music within on the piano.*]

MRS. ELVSTED.

[*Rises from her chair.*] Ugh, what is that?

TESMAN.

[*Runs to the doorway.*] But, dearest Hedda—don't play dance-music this evening! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Ejlert too!

HEDDA.

[*Puts her head out between the curtains.*] And of Aunt Julie. And of all the rest of them. I will be quiet after this.

[*Closes the curtains again.*]

TESMAN.

[*At the writing-table.*] She does not like to see us at this distressing work. I tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted, you shall move in to Aunt Julie's, and then I shall be able to come up in the evenings. And then we can sit and work *there*. Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED.

Yes, perhaps that would be best——

HEDDA.

[*In the back-room.*] I hear what you are saying, Tesman. But how am I to get through the evenings out here.

TESMAN.

[*Turning over the papers.*] Oh, Mr. Brack is so kind, that I have no doubt he will look after you.

BRACK.

[*In the arm-chair, shouts vivaciously.*] Every blessed evening, with all my heart, Mrs. Tesman. We will have great fun here together, we two!

HEDDA.

[*Clearly and firmly.*] Yes, do you not cherish that hope, Judge? You, as sole cock of the walk.

[*A shot is heard within.* TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED, *and* BRACK *leap to their feet.*]

TESMAN.

Oh, now she is fingering those pistols again.

[*He throws the curtains aside, and runs in, followed by* MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA *lies extended lifeless on the sofa. Confusion and noise.* BERTHA *comes in from the right.*]

TESMAN.

[*Shrieks to* BRACK.] Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

BRACK.

[*Half-fainting in the arm-chair.*] But, may God take pity on us, people don't *do* such things as that.

CURTAIN.

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